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**Patrick Lacey**



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I ABOUT IT AND ABOUT .. . . .	7
II PARTEITAG .. . . .	21
III FAITH AND BAD FAITH .. . . .	26
<i>Congress Beginnings—Ein Volk? Ein Führer?— Turncoat Tactics—Other Horst Wessels</i>	
IV PEOPLES, PRINCES AND PARTIES .. . . .	47
<i>Egalité, Fraternité—Indian States—In the “Happy Valley”—Gander and Sauce</i>	
V FASCISM IN ACTION .. . . .	63
<i>Election—In Office—Liquidation of a P.M.— Flint and Tinder—Looking Ahead</i>	
VI DEMOCRATS AT HOME .. . . .	81
<i>Land and People—Party and Policy—Good Com- panions—Bad Stable-mates</i>	
VII ON THE FRONTIER .. . . .	95
<i>Red Shirt—Pax Britannica?—Border-line Cases— Blind Spot and Blind Eye</i>	
VIII HEALING A SORE .. . . .	110
<i>Joys of Independence—New Problems—Negative or Positive Peace</i>	
IX THE GREAT DIVIDE .. . . .	119
<i>Pakistan—Hindustan—Imparsia</i>	
X DIVIDE AND FREE .. . . .	133
APPENDICES .. . . .	139
MAPS .. . . .	end-papers and p. 119



# FASCIST INDIA

## CHAPTER I

### ABOUT IT AND ABOUT

"Let us bravely face the unpleasant facts. There are two nations in India, the Hindus and the Moslems."

(*V. D Savarkar, as President of the Hindu Mahasabha in December, 1939.*)

"The Moslems are a Nation."

(*often said by M. A. Jinnah, President of the Moslem League.*)

"In a resolution today the All-India Scheduled Castes ('Untouchables') Federation . . reiterated its demands for the irreducible minimum of protection 'against the tyranny and oppression which would be sure to follow in the wake of the rule of the Hindu communal majority.'"

(*Reuter report from Bombay, May 7th, 1945.*)

"Beginning with Balfour's thesis that representative government is suitable only where the population is homogeneous and the minority is prepared to accept the decisions of the majority, Sir Reginald Coupland pointed out two cases where these conditions do not exist. In India the Moslems will never accept the rule of the Hindus, and in Palestine the Jews will never accept the rule of the Arabs"

(*Manchester Guardian editorial, June 22nd, 1945, on the previous day's Ludwig Mond lecture at Manchester University.*)

THESE extracts are given here as comments, not as facts, though I shall suggest the time may come when we may

have to concede three of them the value of facts, liking them or not. Least of all are they going to be laboured here in a vain and shabby argument against the independence of India, or in excuse for haggling over the meaning of independence. On the contrary, I quote them as appropriate texts for the appeal I am going to make for the true emancipation, politically, of India's people ; and they explain some curiosities in the terms and sequel of the Wavell offer to India of June 14th, 1945, and in the subsequent Indian elections.

So, by accident, does the rest of this book, or at any rate most of it. I am afraid it also points one of the reasons why, at the Simla Conference on the Wavell offer, the Congress party demanded a share in the nomination of "Untouchables" and Moslems to the reconstructed Government of India. It certainly explains why the Scheduled Castes and Moslem League felt bound to resist this demand. And Chapter VI will tell you why the Unionist Party of the Punjab wanted one nominee who would be beholden neither to the Congress nor to the Moslem League.

According to the Indian Census of 1941, British India then had approximately 40,000,000 Hindus of the Scheduled Castes, *alias* Depressed Classes, *alias* Untouchables, though perhaps not all of them rank as untouchable. For their protection or legitimate satisfaction Lord Wavell felt they must continue to be represented in his Government : they did not wish to commit themselves entirely to the other Hindus whom they accuse of having outcaste them.

To call these 151,000,000 others "the Caste Hindus," and to offer them representation as Caste Hindus in the new Government, was the simplest way of distinguishing the two categories without ignoring their common Hinduism. (We shall see why this worried Mr. Gandhi, e.g.)

Then there were the 80,000,000 Moslems of British India. Why were they to have numerical equality with the Caste Hindus in the new Government ? Because

the point had been made that the Moslems and Hindus were distinct nations, entitled as such to an equality of status as such. Then why not give the Moslems parity with all Hinduism, caste and outcaste? Because a reconstruction of a caretaker Government for British India alone must not prejudice a final decision on the question of nationality in the second and much more important stage of the general plan.

This second stage would be the drafting by Indians themselves of a new Constitution for All India, including the Indian States, or a brace of Constitutions for a divided India. An immediate result might be the end of British authority to hold the scales between the Indian communities or nations : an invidious and odious job.\*

A few more points about the Wavell offer :

(i) It was virtually the same, in purpose, as the offer Sir Stafford Cripps took to India in March 1942. It gave precision to the Cripps proposal for immediate changes in the Viceroy's Executive Council, commonly called the Government of India ; and it repeated the pledge that India would be free to make a new Constitution for herself. Viceroys hitherto have hand-picked their Ministers with little or no reference to political parties. Lord Wavell invited Indian politicians to advise and help him in substituting their own nominees for the eleven Indians, and for three of the four British, who were in his Executive Council. One of the new nominees would be the first Indian non-official to have charge of British India's finance : another would be the first Indian, and first man of any race, to relieve the Viceroy of responsibility (under Whitehall) for India's External Affairs.

At the same time Lord Wavell and the British Government said they hoped to see a simultaneous recovery of

\* The statistics I have given of communal populations in 1941 are from British India only. Add the Indian States, and you have a total of approximately 390,000,000 people. Among them are 207,000,000 Caste Hindus ; 49,000,000 of the Scheduled Castes ; and 94,000,000 Moslems, if you include the tribesmen of the North-West frontier. Smaller communities of course, will be mentioned in this book.

local self-government by those British-Indian provinces that had lost their autonomy.

(ii) As it is fashionable to make much moan about might-have-beens, I suppose I ought to say here that not very long ago these changes at the Centre and in the provinces would have been enough to placate India, and absorb her political energies, almost indefinitely. But that only helps to make them look necessarily temporary today.

(iii) The terms of both the Cripps and the Wavell offers owed a good deal to specific Indian suggestion. In the first case this had come from a small committee headed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, doyen of the Liberals. In the second, it came from Mr. Bhulabhai Desai and Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan, respectively Leader of the Opposition and deputy leader of the Moslem League in the Central Legislative Assembly. (I mention this because it happens to be a truth that is little known, not merely because I know and like these three wise men.) Both offers were sponsored, too, by all parties in the first Churchill Coalition at Westminster. And the Wavell offer presumably had the blessing of those men in the Government of India to whom it more-or-less promised a loss of office and "face" but therefore (by their agreement with it) a gain in personal honour. For these, maybe, there would be no return : or could they be begged to return if the new Government were to fail ? Among them was Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar. He was greatly distinguishing himself and India by his service to the world at the San Francisco Conference.

(iv) In comparing the two offers you should not overlook the part played by the Japanese. They were beating us when Cripps went to India ; there was understandable alarm in the land ; the Congress party, and perhaps some others, were naturally wondering whether it could gain more by bargaining with defeated Europeans or by appeasing the conquerors from a limb of its own Asia. So Gandhi could be quoted as saying that the Cripps offer was "a post-dated cheque on a bank that was

obviously failing." Three years later the war situation was as different as possible, and a new Viceroy had won countless Indian hearts.

But he had won them to himself : he could not quite win them to one another. As far as one can tell at London's distance from India, in spite of communal hostilities the Simla conference was far more dignified and decent than the simultaneous, much bigger election campaign in this comparatively wee island. Yet the conference by no means reconciled either the Indian parties or the communities ; and that was a sad omen for the vastly greater undertaking whose prelude it was meant to be. The Indian parties could not agree on a common list of nominees to the Government ; and communalitis made this more unfortunate than any analogous disagreement in Britain would be. Lord Wavell had to let them submit competitive lists to his final selection, and reserve for himself a freer hand than he ought to have needed. Or at any rate, with a subtle but transparent air of reasonableness, the Congress party insisted on competing against all the others, including a community or two not represented at the conference ; and the Moslem League retorted with a refusal (explained but not justified in this book) to tolerate any competition for Moslem seats in the new Government. That refusal was abominated. It looks less perverse now, since new elections to the Central Legislature gave the Moslem League all the seats reserved for Moslems in the Lower House and 86.6 per cent. of the votes cast for them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Most of the foregoing was written when the Simla conference had just adjourned. What follows—except for rare additions—was written some time before the conference. Several of the chapters to come were drafted before the war. That is why the book discusses by accident the snags that defeated the gallant efforts at Simla. It tries to explain, and to sterilize or constrict, the roots of troubles that may rise again, with more

dangerous vigour, in the far more difficult planning of India's own free Constitution. They are mainly political troubles, so in the immediate present they involve only the small minority of Indians that has time for politics ; but this is a political book. Its original draft therefore began with two comments in those formidable State papers, the Reports of the Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Reform. Here they are :

" It would be an utter misapprehension to suppose that Hindu-Moslem antagonism is analogous to the separation between religious denominations in contemporary Europe. Differences of race, a different system of law, and the absence of inter-marriage constitute a far more effective barrier. It is a basic opposition manifesting itself at every turn in social custom and economic competition, as well as in mutual religious antipathy. Today, in spite of much neighbourly kindness in ordinary affairs, and notwithstanding all the efforts made by men of good will in both communities, the rivalry and dissension between these two forces are one of the chief stumbling-blocks in the way of smoother and more rapid progress."

(I.S.C., 1930, Vol. I, para. 36.)

" The difference between the two is not only one of religion in the stricter sense, but also of law and culture. They may be said indeed to represent two distinct and separate civilizations. Hinduism is distinguished by the phenomenon of caste, which is the basis of its religious and social system : the religion of Islam is based on the conception of the equality of man."

(J.P.C., 1934, Vol. I, para. 2.)

But when the Cripps and the Wavell offers were presented to India she was also divided constitutionally into three parts, with three quite different systems of government. They were :

A. The self-governing provinces of British India, where responsible Indian Ministers and parliaments have charge of all provincial affairs, under Part I of the Government of India Act, 1935.

B. The other British-Indian provinces, where the

British Governors, subject to the British Parliament, were ruling *pro tem.* under Clause 93 of the same Act.

C. The 500 or more Indian States, with a total of 93,200,000 people, subject in greater or less degree to the domestic sovereignty and autocracy of their hereditary Maharajas, Nawabs, etc.

My earlier chapters will be mainly about B. A middle chapter will refer briefly to C. The later chapters will be concerned chiefly with the greater part of A.

To put it rather too simply—otherwise this introduction will seem endless—the provinces of group A have popular Governments like our own, responsible to their own elected parliaments for all those things that most intimately affect the normal, day-by-day life of the common man : social services, including education and agriculture, provincial finance, law and order, and so on. There had been, for a time, similar Governments in the B provinces, where the Congress party won the elections of 1937, and Congress Governments ruled for several months. But late in 1939 they were pulled out of office by the party caucus, with varying degrees of consent. The Congress party then handed its provinces back to the care of their British Governors who took charge once again of the provincial affairs I have mentioned.

Between the spring of 1942 and summer of 1945 there were some movements to and fro between groups A and B, as one or another province resumed or relapsed from autonomy. But there was a considerable period when the groups stood like this :

A	B
<i>Six Self-governing Provinces</i>	<i>Five Non-autonomous (alias Congress) Provinces</i>
Punjab	Madras
North-West Frontier Province	Bombay
Sind	Bihar
Bengal	United Provinces
Assam	Central Provinces
Orissa	
Total pop. : 115,200,000	Total pop. : 180,600,000

So on the left you had over 115,000,000 people—a total much larger than the population of any independent country except China, Russia and the U.S.A.—governing themselves on democratic lines in the way I have referred to. And if you are going to read the rest of this book, please bear in mind that Moslems were the majority in four of the six politically progressive provinces, but in none of the other five. Please also note that three of the former make a bloc of contiguous territories in India's north-west corner. The relapse of Bengal in 1945 was most regrettable, but did not affect the strength of that north-west corner.

So much for *provincial* affairs. As I say, you will find more about them in the chapters to come, where they are related to the argument of this book. But you might say its main theme is the competition among Indians for unitary or divided control of their *continental* affairs. For immediate purposes, let us say that these mean, e.g., the defence of India, her foreign policy, the senior Civil Service and great railway system, the finance of them, taxation to provide the finance, customs and principal excise. They and certain other matters are the concern of the Central Government and legislature at Delhi. This authority at the Centre, though liberalized, has not been radically reformed by the Act of 1935, and most of its administrative jurisdiction is still confined to the area of British India's eleven provinces. That is because it has not been possible to start working the reforms prescribed by Part II of the 1935 Act. Part II looked forward to a Federation of All India, embracing both British India and the 500-odd States of Indian India (a silly but convenient name) under a single, responsible Federal Government and Parliament. But when the war interfered, the many Princes ruling in Indian India had not yet decided how or on what terms they would join the Federation, and the two biggest political parties in British India were hanging back, for reasons suggested in this book.

Here, then, you have broad outlines of the constitutional

situation that took Sir Stafford Cripps to India in March 1942. All was going tolerably well, locally, in four of the eleven provinces, and better than anyone had a right to expect in one or two of the four. The war effort of the other seven, though in many ways remarkable, was hampered by the opposition of the biggest of India's political parties ; and we were no nearer self-government for *all* India, from the Centre, than we had been when the Act of 1935 was passed seven years before. In fact, it looked very much indeed as if this Act simply would not do. So in spite of all the toil and sweat expended on the Act—three massive Round Table Conferences in London; long, long sittings of a joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Reform, attended by many Indian helpers and witnesses ; floods of ink poured out over acres of paper ; long and stormy debates in Parliament at Westminster—in spite of all that, the Act was lightly thrown overboard, and Cripps went to India to pave the way for something different and better.

Some people think an old mistake was repeated in the proposals he took to India. They say the plan expected the impossible—it expected “two distinct and separate civilizations,” Hindu and Moslem, to merge themselves spontaneously under a single Constitution of their own agreed choice and equally appropriate to both. But the Cripps plan had these great merits : Its authors had the courage to admit that all the British toil and sweat over reforms for India had been misdirected ; they preferred the idea of a Constitution made in India by Indians themselves, for an India unequivocally free ; and they did leave room for the birth of true freedom in India by recognition and expression of her great, fundamental division.

They proposed that immediately after the war there should be general elections to the existing parliaments of the British-Indian provinces. These would be followed by a conference of Indians, in India, to devise a new Constitution for an India that would have exact equality of freedom and status with Great Britain and all the other

Dominions—freedom to leave the British Commonwealth altogether, if she wanted to. (Provincial elections are going on as I revise the final proofs of this book: only the Central elections are over.) The delegates to the “constitution-making body” would be chosen partly by the Legislative Assemblies of the British-Indian provinces, partly by the States of Indian India. There are 1,585 members of the provincial Assemblies, and they would elect approximately one-tenth as many delegates to the “constitution-making body.” So British India’s 300,000,000-odd people would be represented in it by, say, 160 delegates—roughly one in every 1,800,000 of her population. The Indian States, with 90,000,000-odd people, would be represented in a similar ratio to their aggregate population, so they would have about 50 delegates. The constitution-making body would thus have about 210 members—ten times the number attending Lord Wavell’s conference at Simla.

Now up to that point the Cripps plan kept very close indeed to all that was known about constructive views in the Congress party on the making of a free India. The Congress party, and others, had objected to the idea of a Constitution made in England by the British, or made by any other foreigners. And in essence, the constitution-making body of the Cripps plan was the very thing the Congress had demanded, off and on, for several years. I say “demanded,” because that had been the tone of Congress talk about a constituent assembly, to be elected by methods which the party had never detailed. But on page 35 you will find a personal reminiscence that over ten years ago the Government had no objection whatever to the Congress or any other organisation convening just such an assembly to draft a new Constitution; and you will see what prevented the Congress from taking the hint. (The Scheduled Castes, incidentally, said the Cripps plan would be “sure to place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule” as in “the black days of the ancient past.”)

The Cripps plan would probably give the Congress

party by far the biggest bloc in the conference it suggests, but perhaps something less than control over it. At the 1937 general elections, as you shall see, the party won just a little less than a majority of the 1,585 seats in the provincial Legislative Assemblies that are to elect four-fifths of the constitution-making body. It could not be sure of doing better this time: it may be weak in the Indian States' delegation to the conference, if it ever meets. Because of the party's policy and ambitions, as described in this book, I believe that these uncertainties were enough to influence Congressmen against the Cripps plan. They would hardly discuss the core of it. Instead, they demanded immediately what *they* wanted at once, without regard to other people. They demanded, immediately, a revolution in the Central authority of British India that would give them what they called an interim National Government. But by this they meant a packed Government, a Government of Congressmen and their yes-men: a fascist or totalitarian regime that would effectively prejudice any future constitution-making in India.

Why do I think that? Why did Sir Stafford Cripps say virtually the same and the Wavell offer tacitly acknowledge this belief and concern? Because of the background of political history against which this book sets the two offers.

Congress politicians, and their friends in Britain and the U.S.A., often claim that the party's effort has been a *national* campaign for responsible *democracy*. That has been disputed already by many abler critics than I am, but usually with negative results or because of hostility to Indian self-rule. Support of the claim has been equally negative, and equally prejudicial in its results, willy-nilly. What I am going to do is to point the more positive argument that for years the Congress has been a communal, fascist or quasi-fascist movement towards authoritarian control of India—perhaps even by only a minority active within and for the party. It is not my business to judge whether that would be bad for each and

every part of India. The Congress might produce leaders who would do as much, relatively, for their own provinces as Kemal did for Turkey or Salazar for Portugal. But for eight years I saw on the spot how the movement threatened to stifle real self-government, and how it obstructed the peaceful progress of India, if only because it was resented fiercely by a large mass of people whose interests the Congress hierarchy overlooked or opposed.

That brings me to another part and virtue of the Cripps plan—another reason for the Congress party's original dislike of it.

In spite of all past experience, we may perhaps go on hoping that the "constitution-making body" will meet and do its job. We may hope, in spite of everything, that the 210 delegates will draft a Constitution acceptable and workable by the whole of India. But in case contrary history repeats itself, the Cripps plan provides an escape-hole for any part or community of India that dislikes the new-made Constitution and can stand on its own legs. Like the Atlantic Charter, the plan will not allow any Indian province or group of provinces to be coerced into submission to a system of government repugnant to it. If, for instance, the racially intimate neighbours of the Punjab, Kashmir, Bahawalpur, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan, agree in disapproval of the new Constitution, the Cripps proposals would allow them to opt out of it and combine to form a separate Dominion with a different Constitution of its own making.

Madras could do the same, of course : it has about 50,000,000 people. So could any other sizeable area. But I have particularly mentioned that group of provinces in the north-west corner of India because they would make up the bulk of Pakistan. I shall have much more to say about that in my last chapters, but I mention it now because the Pakistan idea influenced the Cripps negotiations in India. Having seen the Congress plunge for bargaining-points, and refuse to put the war before its own ambitions, the Moslem League followed suit, though not so far. The Moslem League is the second biggest,

operative political organization in India. It told Sir Stafford Cripps that it could not accept his plan unless it had firmer guarantees that Pakistan would be allowed to separate from the rest of India. The dividing line would represent the border between a preponderantly Moslem part of the country and the much bigger part where Congress-Hindu supremacy seems unchallengeable.

I should have thought the Cripps proposals offered the Moslems the loophole they needed. But I can understand, as I show you in later chapters, why they were so very anxious for an insurance against the fascism of their most powerful rivals.

We say we have been fighting to secure for each people the right to choose its own form of government, provided it leaves its neighbours in peace. Very well, then, let us do for Indians what we preach, whether we have their co-operation or not. Our original pledge to India was a promise to races of men, not to the mass of earth they inhabit. It was a promise to all the peoples of India : it said nothing about a single, uniform system of government for them all : so we need not and should not disappoint either of the great communities on the sole pretext that the other quarrels with it or has made a mess of things.

If we find that in a distinctive area of India a large majority of the people or voters want Congress rule, let them have it. But if one reason for the party's repudiation of Cripps was the loophole in his plan for escape from Congress rule—if a federal or unitary Constitution for the whole sub-continent would mean the negation of real self-rule in any large part of India—then our pledge and the Atlantic Charter surely require us to set that part on its own independent legs, so that fascism may be restricted to regions that want it.

Let us, like the Cripps plan, reject the obstructionist theory that so great a sub-continent cannot or must not be emancipated except as a single geographical polity. We should concede the Hindu majority the best possible chance of working out its own destiny with the least

avoidable trouble from the Moslems. We should let the Moslem millions safeguard themselves, as well as they can, peaceably and constitutionally, against a political system that we and they dislike. We should try to satisfy Hindu and Moslem alike by letting each community have a form of self-rule (and self-expression by autonomy) appropriate to its distinctive traits.

\* \* \* \* \*

So much for a synopsis and explanation of this book. Because it was first written before the Cripps mission, and much of it before the war, you will find in it things you may not expect, and miss things you may be looking for. A whole chapter and more, for instance, discusses the problem of the North-West tribal territory as a sore that Pakistan might alleviate ; but you may find little or nothing here about the troubles elsewhere in India during the late summer of 1942. For that I make no apology. Mischief on the North-West border has been a hardy and expensive annual for generations : the other riots were an ephemeral, though shameful, outcome of the World War and Congress policy, and I hope you will be able to read into this book sufficient explanatory comment on them.

I have been and shall be accused of partisanship—of a bias for the fire-engine against the fire. But if I seem to overlook contrary arguments, you will either supply them yourself or remember that plenty of other people have published them and nothing else on my subject. I have not put the whole case against Congress fascism. More could have been said if honesty, a paper shortage and other duties had admitted reminiscences or credible hearsay where memory was my only contemporary notebook. I might have examined reasons why Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, neither a Moslem nor a Pakistani, but the Bombay leader of the Depressed Classes, came out with the arguments for Pakistan that are quoted in my final chapter. But I must stick to my last.

You may object that I strain supposed analogies

between Indian and European affairs. If you do, you are probably right ; but perhaps they are closer, however fortuitous, than some people may think. Anyhow, they may help an understanding of my argument, if only because events in Europe have been nearer and more intelligible to readers in England than developments in India.

Lastly let me say that though I stand by my premises, nobody will be happier than myself if the more sombre of my conclusions are reduced to poppycock by long-term consequences of the Wavell offer and conference. But beware of buying the next generation's eggs before their layers are hatched.

## CHAPTER II

### PARTEITAG

SOME critics will probably say or think that I take the Indian Congress party too seriously. Of that I have my doubts, of course, and so will others for rather different reasons. But let me begin with a glance at the lighter side—at the party holding one of those annual rallies or plenary conferences that have become so theatrical in recent decades. Here may be found a concentration of all Congress talents, with its active rank and file representatively assembled to discuss what they conceive to be big issues of moment. We may also judge how far the ritual and spirit of such affairs suggest the ideology (if we must have the word) of a democratic convention or of pre-war Nuremberg rallies. This account for the most part shall be a composite picture drawn from personal experience of certain sessions a few years ago.

Any number up to two thousand or more delegates, not counting hangers-on and a great audience, may attend a Congress session. They lodge, mostly, in a camp of bamboo hutlets, with temporary shops, banks, hospital,

post and telegraph offices and what-not. A special group of huts is roped off in the heart of the camp for Gandhi and his retinue. He himself occupies a hut surpassing all others. Its walls and ceiling within are lined all over with white *khaddar* (homespun cloth) and a muddy-white cloth covers the floor. For some mysterious reason the sanctum bristles with an extraordinary number of electric switches. A low, all-white divan fills the Place of Honour in the midst of this Great White Silence. Here sits Gandhi, leaning against a neat bolster and spinning his daily ration of yarn, while his devoted staff moves and murmurs reverently to and fro in attendance upon him. At the entrance to the hut every ignorant visitor is bidden to "put off thy shoes from off thy feet" before treading the holy ground.

Congress "volunteers" of both sexes police the camp : the boys in khaki forage-caps, shirts and shorts, the girls in saffron saris. Their officers wear passable but various imitations of military uniforms, mostly British. They are very proud of these, but are little used to their jack-boots or leggings, and are apt to strut about with a slightly ludicrous self-consciousness. As the corps was senior in age to its more violent counterpart in Germany, it had its own salute before the Nazi gesture became familiar. Instead of shooting out an arm at full stretch up and forward, Congress "volunteers" bring the forearm smartly across the chest and parallel with the ground. On my first visit nearly all of them were models of courtesy and kindness to European visitors. Often they went out of their way to help me when I needed the least or most tiresome assistance. Their successors some years later were different : fussy and sometimes fantastically officious, to the special annoyance of my Indian colleagues of the Press.

The camp buzzes all day with an industrious hither-and-thithering, much of it as unpolitical as anything can be. Shrill voices cry out upon one another : everywhere there is a gaiety of chatter or expostulation : groups of friends from different parts of India exchange ecstatic greetings. Verily it is a *tamasha* such as India loves.

The Working Committee, or Congress "Cabinet," consists of some fifteen members appointed by the President *pro tem.* in his sole discretion. It drafts the principal resolutions for submission to the plenary session *via* the Subjects Committee, which is a functional *alias* for the All-India Congress Committee. The Subjects Committee in recent years has varied from under a hundred to nearly four hundred members. Its proceedings are generally considered the Thing that Matters in the politics of the *parteitag*. They are the only debates worth the name that you may hear during the week, and they are nearly always decisive. Minor hullabaloos occur now and then; irrelevant diversions seem unavoidable. At one session a rat in a corner of the marquee raised brief commotion worthy of a Victorian boudoir. Humour is apt to go astray under the pressure of controversy, as it does everywhere else. One or two priestly politicians come stripped to the waist and wear only a skirt of sack-cloth. Such a man made a vigorous speech with snarling teeth, and then left the marquee. The next orator won a cheap laugh by saying that a smell had gone with him.\* But often there is genuine, orderly debating, and occasionally the party's intelligentsia keep it on a sound level.

The open or plenary session is very different. Before the appointed hour a steady stream of people and motor-cars flows into the Congress camp. (The aristocratic or middle-class car is admitted within the portals, whereas the plebeian tonga seems to be excluded.) There is less of the fierce pandemonium that has marred other sessions, and at six o'clock possibly 30,000 people are squatting and chatting quietly in the arena while workmen busily give it the final touching-up.

The whole arena is surrounded by strips of the party tricolour. The "seats" are bamboo mats. The delegates and the vastly more numerous audience are ranged

\* Yes - but in the House of Commons one day, when a member complained that he could not hear, another M.P. shouted "Wash your ears then"

in concentric semicircles facing the rostrum, whose design would be excellent without the Christmas-tree arrangement of umbrella-like growths above it. At a little distance behind the rostrum is the dais for the great—the Working Committee in the middle, the All-India Congress Committee grouped round it, and the plutocrats on either side.

The President has come to the camp in state on a white charger, followed by a string of elephants and escorted by a bodyguard of volunteers. In overdue course his procession, now on foot, enters the conference arena. It is headed by a drum and bugle band playing a British marching air and wearing blue shorts under white shirts and caps. Then comes the General Officer Commanding the Congress Volunteers, with his Chief of Staff. He would have lent the utmost distinction to any similar part in a pantomime. Reading from top to bottom, he consists of a considerable turban of uncertain caste, palest yellow ; a roaming moustache ; a well-filled tunic of white *khaddar* crossed by a Sam Browne belt and adorned with an outsize “medal” ribbon in the Congress colours ; a pair of white *khaddar* riding breeches ; leggings, uneasy boots, and short swagger cane. His mate is more homogeneous in colour (*khaki*) but less so in design. Both of them are very important indeed, for immediately behind them are the ex- and sitting Presidents, and then Gandhi with members of the Working Committee.

When the people who matter are settled in their places the whole company stands for the singing of *Bande Mataram* (Floreat Motherland) to a very sad tune by performers in the rostrum. Then we all sit down again to recitation of a poem in praise of President Nehru and a speech by the chairman of the Reception Committee. The President follows at last with an address lasting a little over two hours.

By this time the arena is looking very attractive. It is lighted adequately but not aggressively, and the rostrum is picked out in coloured lamps. This way and that, the audience sits silent and still in rows and curves of

dusty white. By no means all of them are familiar with Jawaharlal's Urdu. It would be hard to say how many of them understand his metaphysics, his yearnings, his indictment of all the things they do know, including the Congress itself. But there is something oddly, deeply impressive in these great gatherings under the stars of people patient enough just to sit, and listen, and wonder.

Fun and spectacle apart, Congressmen have confessed more than once that their open sessions border on farce. Many of the resolutions are read out, put to the vote by show of hands, and declared carried unanimously in a few minutes or less. Others are supported discursively in a series of impassioned speeches with little risk of audible criticism from anyone present. The orators must play to the gallery if only because amplifiers carry their voices to everyone in the multitude before them. As demagogic stimulants for credulous ears the speeches are sometimes first-rate : as contributions to thought most of them are merely bathetic, like some of our own electioneering. A surprising event at Lucknow in 1936 was the open session's reversal of the Subjects Committee's vote against P.R. for elections to the All-India Congress Committee. Nothing like that happened at Karachi in 1931 : Gandhi would not have allowed it, if he had scented any serious danger of it. Indeed, when a certain resolution was challenged, he said he would starve himself to death if it were rejected : so of course it wasn't.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the morrow of his triumph in that session I had a long talk with Gandhi in his hut at the camp. We discussed, among other things, a current orgy of communal rioting in India, and the lessons it suggested for the future. Gandhi seemed cheerfully pessimistic when he said :

"The worst that can happen is that we might have to put up with civil war for a time, but only for a little while. Very possibly there will be some serious communal strife,

and if you will not help us to end it by lending us troops like the old mercenary armies of history, then it may perhaps end itself in the exhaustion or destruction of the one community or the other. It is not consistent with the self-respect of a country or race that it should give *carte blanche* to another nation or race, or individual members of it, to say, ‘These people can’t manage their own affairs, so they gave us a free hand to do it for them.’”

Exactly. This suggests some of the very questions I want to answer if I can : Which community’s exhaustion would the Congress prefer, if it must happen? What are the possibilities and main irritants of the strife? What can we do to avert disaster without offending against Gandhi’s very reasonable notions of self-respect?

### CHAPTER III

#### FAITH AND BAD FAITH

##### *Congress Beginnings*

THE Indian Congress party was founded in 1885. Its origin matters little in the light or shade of recent history, but we should remember a comment on them by a fiery champion who died in the party’s service several years ago.

Lala Lajpat Rai—still remembered with honour by Hindu nationalists—affirmed that the Congress was not really an indigenous movement “from within.” Its infancy and childhood were nourished devotedly by Indians like W. C. Bonnerjee and G. K. Gokhale ; but its earliest inspiration and mainstays were British servants of India such as A. O. Hume, for long its General Secretary ; George Yule and William Wedderburn, its fourth and fifth Presidents ; Henry Cotton, and others. “It is clear,” said R. M. Sayani, in his presidential address to the party’s twelfth conference, “that the Congress was

'the direct outcome of the noble policy of England in introducing English education in India, and diffusing knowledge over the length and breadth of this country and thus awakening the rising young men of our country to a sense of the duties they owed to themselves, to their neighbours, and to their countrymen generally.' In earlier and later sessions of the party—covering its first thirty years, at any rate—Indian nationalists gave British rule equal and often higher praise. The vehement abuse we get from their successors is a tribute to the freedom of speech, and to the value of the *lingua franca*, which they enjoy today under the same authority.

At its inaugural meeting the foremost aims of the Congress were declared to be :

- "(a) the promotion of personal intimacy and friendship among all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in the Empire ; and
- "(b) the eradication, by direct friendly personal intercourse, of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country, and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in our beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign." (Lord Ripon's term as Viceroy of India had ended in the previous year, 1884.)

Through many years of ups and downs but growing influence the Congress tried to achieve this and more. Perhaps it was trying, or genuinely thought it was trying, in the first decade of the present century, when it sponsored a bitter and successful campaign against the division of Bengal into two provinces. Moslems welcomed the change, but Hindus hated it, and its reversal was an early example of our taste for appeasing opponents at the expense of our friends. Perhaps those Congressmen also were trying who supported the less reasonable partition of Bihar and Orissa a few years ago : this interested the Moslems scarcely at all. There is no cause to doubt the honesty of the party's "most sincere and grateful thanks for the wise and generous proposals" of Lords

Morley and Minto in 1908 : they seem wretched little reforms when compared with those that the party damns as niggardly, and worse, today. It is undeniable that in two, at least, of its civil disobedience movements since 1918 the Congress united a bigger and more potent force of public opinion than any Indian Government has had to reckon with at any other time since British rule began. For long the Congress had been the spearhead of progressive politics in India. It had always contained men capable of honourable, single-minded devotion to a cause. It became the one really big, effective, durable organization to stimulate a praiseworthy ambition for self-government. No one could justly complain if it was impatient of people whose national self-respect seemed more lukewarm. I still believe that in 1937-39, when Congress Ministers ruled for a while in seven autonomous provinces, several of them and many followers had excellent intentions and began to implement them.

But dangers inherent in the party's position and course became plain years ago, and are more conspicuous now. When political competition is feeble or unorganized, pride of country and vanity of party may be confused even more easily in a great heterogeneous sub-continent like India than in a comprehensible unit of Europe.. It was frankly claimed "the Congress is India" long before we heard the analogous boast that "Hitler is Germany and Germany is Hitler." In the heyday of the party's militancy its original aims were forgotten or submerged. We must try to see, later, what sort of substitute it has found for them.

#### *Ein Volk? Ein Fuhrer?*

The party is not India. In the nature of things it cannot be India as nearly or as readily as Germany seems to have identified itself with Hitler and Nazism. It may try, but facts are against it.

If you know what to look and listen for, you will notice symptoms of these facts at any of the party's annual

rallies. They may be less conspicuous than the hostile Sikh demonstration at Lahore in 1929, when a handful of British police interposed itself between the Sikhs and the Congress meeting they were threatening to attack. The Sikhs are a tiny minority, and their political interests are confined almost entirely to one province, but they have an importance and a potency transcending arithmetic and boundaries. The quarrel in 1929 was patched up—that and nothing more. The Sikhs have often shown, since then, that few of them have much use for any party except their own and one other—opposed by the Congress—which shall be discussed in a chapter on the Punjab. At the provincial elections of 1936-37 the Congress won only four of the Sikhs' 31 seats in the Punjab Legislature. It could not win either of the Sikh constituencies for the Central Legislature in 1945.

The Mohammedans are obviously the principal minority in India. They now number over 90,000,000, or twice the population of Great Britain. They gave India its greatest rulers (as well as a few of its worst) in the centuries preceding British supremacy, and her grandest surviving treasures of architecture. The most virile of them hold the western gateway of the sub-continent: east, others of them are numerically predominant in the eastern gateway, next to the Burma border. They are a poorer community, financially, than the Hindus, but the cost of travel does not explain their aloofness from Congress *tamashas*. Karachi is the capital of Sind, a region where a substantial majority of the population is Moslem, and nearly half the city's 350,000 people are Moslems. Yet, according to an outside estimate by Congressmen themselves, Moslems were only 15 per cent. of the people attending or visiting the party's rally at Karachi in 1931, when its political prestige stood exceptionally high. I believe the ratio at Lucknow five years later was even lower—quite a lot lower—though Lucknow is a centre of Moslem culture and about 40 per cent. of its population is Mohammedan.

I have mentioned a tribute by R. M. Sayani, twelfth President of the Congress, to the "noble policy of the British" in introducing English education to India. He added :

"The learning of an entirely unknown and foreign language, of course, required hard application and industry. The Hindus were accustomed to this, as even under the Moslem rule they had practically to master a foreign tongue, and so easily took to the new education. But the Mussulmans had not yet become accustomed to this sort of thing. The result was that so far as education was concerned, the Mussulmans, who were once superior to the Hindus, now actually became their inferiors. They were gradually ousted from their lands, their offices : in fact everything was lost save their honour. The Hindus, from a subservient state, came into the worldly advantages of their former masters. Their exultation knew no bounds, and they trod upon the heels [? or toes] of their former masters. This represents the train of thought which pre-occupies the minds of many who would otherwise be well-disposed towards the Congress movement."

Two episodes apart, it has been so ever since Congress began. When he is not its best apologist, Mr. Edward Thompson is a friendlier critic of the Congress than of the Mohammedans. He has written that the nationalist movement in India was "overwhelmingly Hindu" for its first twenty years : later, under Tilak, who "austerely discouraged Mohammedanism," it became "fiercely, even savagely, Hindu in sentiment." Its rage against the partition of Bengal had the important effect, not only of unsettling that "settled fact," but of generating the Moslem League. Even in Gandhi's veins the communal corpuscles sometimes seem to flourish. When one of his sons became a Mohammedan, that was the first moment and deed which provoked him to publish an astonishing, angry outburst of censure on the son's mode of life for many years before. While I was reading the first proofs of this page, news came of Gandhi's protest, on behalf of the caste Hindus, against the Wavell proposals for equal

representation of the Moslems in a reformed Government of India.\*

The two exceptional episodes were the Khilafat movement shortly after the last war, and the Red Shirt movement in the North-West Frontier in the early nineteen-thirties.

The Khilafatists, led by the brothers Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, were concerned mainly with things remote from practical Indian politics : their big idea was that a wicked and profane Britain meant to demolish the Caliphate of Constantinople, and that the old Turkish Empire ought to be restored entire. The Congress was then running its first disobedience campaign, and Gandhi—this time avowedly an opportunist—embraced the Ali brothers and their followers as welcome allies. But a new and better Turkey itself abolished the Caliphate, and cold-shouldered a protesting mission of Indian Moslems. The Congress was never enthusiastic : the Khilafat movement led only to a massacre of Hindus in Madras by fanatical Moplahs (Moslems), and a profound slump in Gandhi's stock.

The Red Shirts ten years later turned the tables : it was they who thought it expedient to embrace Gandhi and the Congress as welcome Allies. This temporarily formidable *mesalliance* must be discussed when we arrive at the North West-Frontier, when we may find it precarious and uncomfortable. It was disliked by orthodox Congressmen in Peshawar, and it did not give their party a clear majority at the provincial election in 1937. Since 1937 the N.W.F.P. has had pro-Congress and anti-Congress Ministries alternately. Its latest pro-Congress Government took office without waiting for the party to recover elsewhere, and dissociated itself from the party's anti-war policy. As *The Times* correspondent said,

\* Little exception might have been taken to Gandhi's attitude if he had acknowledged himself a caste Hindu only defending his own. But at the same time he was objecting that there was no such thing, politically, as a caste Hindu : he knew that the other Hindus were to have their own representatives in the new Government : and he has usually professed to speak for all Indians, irrespective of community.

"none would claim that the Congress Moslems of the Frontier have the same political faith as that which inspires the Hindu members of the Congress, throughout the country as a whole."

The next two chapters will show, I think, why and how the more normal estrangement of Congress and Moslems has developed in recent years. To mention Moslem adherents and Presidents of the Congress is no real answer. There have been Belgian, Bohemian, British, Danish and Dutch Nazis ; and the Germans, whatever they think of them, have not rejected their services. Moslems within the Congress may have much better motives for staying there : if they would use their position to promote a fair and honest communal rapprochement, they would deserve untold gratitude. But for the present we must acknowledge facts as they are. In the last General Election to the Central Legislative Assembly the Congress won fifty-six of the 102 elective seats, but not one of the thirty reserved for Mohammedans. In the eleven Provincial Legislative Assemblies the Moslems have 495 reserved seats. Of these the Congress won 26 in 1937. The following table shows how Moslems armed with the authentic Congress coupon fared in the several provinces\* :

Province	Total of Moslem Seats		Moslem Seats won by Congress
Assam	..	34	0
Bengal	..	119	0
Bihar	..	40	4
Bombay	..	30	0
C.P.	..	14	0
Madras	..	28	4
N.W.F.P.	..	36	15
Orissa	..	4	0
Punjab	..	90	2
U.P.	..	64	1
Sind	..	36	0

-In provinces under Congress Governments, a few Mohammedans went over to the Congress after the

\* STOP PRESS : Congress Moslems are doing a shade better in the current 1945 elections, but a very thin shade.

elections. This was inevitable, if only because provincial Governors are required to ensure representation of minorities in their Cabinets. Nevertheless, between January 1st, 1938, and September 12th, 1942, the Congress won only three of the 41 by-elections to Moslem seats in the Lower Houses. The Moslem League won 36. *The Times* now reports that by July 1945 the Moslem League had lost only one of the 70 by-elections it had fought since 1937.

Nor must we forget the Hindu Liberals, the Depressed Classes and the Indian Christians. One could wish the Liberals would pull themselves together and fortify their unquestionable sanity with some political vigour, for they could do much to ease communal and other problems. Certainly they belie the argument that the Congress is the intelligentsia : among them are minds of great capacity indeed. The Depressed Classes are almost too unhappy, too unfortunate, to know where they stand : whether the Congress as a whole is genuinely concerned for their welfare or regards them as pawns to be used and discarded as political expedience suggests. Probably many of them look to Gandhi rather than to the accredited leaders from their own Untouchable ranks ; but these, as you shall see, have made some severe comments on the Congress attitude to their community. The Indian Christians have no independent organization that can be called a political party. Four of their twenty reserved seats went to the Congress in the 1937 elections.\*

### *Turncoat Tactics*

In the triangular deadlock queering Indian politics from 1940 onwards the fundamental difficulty was more

\* Appendix IV reproduces a most interesting statement by certain leaders of political minorities. And to do them justice we must acknowledge that not all Congressmen make equal claims for their party. In a speech on January 18th, 1945 Mrs. Sarojini Naidu—often a member of the Working Committee—“admitted that the Moslems and large sections of the Harijans (Untouchable Hindus) were not in the Congress : nor were the Indian Christians and Parsis. There were representatives of every section in the Congress organization, but,” she said, “they were only symbols.”

real, obvious and obstinate than British friends of Congress have cared to recognize.

Congressmen wanted an immediate declaration of India's independence outside the British Commonwealth. By Gandhi's article in the *Harijan* of June 15th, 1940, they had also claimed to be the only politicians in India who really mattered. For the period of the war they demanded such changes in the Central Government as would be—to their own satisfaction—a practical guarantee that the British would give them what they wanted : such immediate changes in the Central Government as would cast the mould of the future Constitution irrevocably at once : or to put it in another way, that the foundations, size and outlines of the political house should be drawn *immediately* and assignment of the freehold registered forthwith.

The Government was in duty bound to ask the minorities, "What do you say?"—and the foremost of the minorities, represented by the Moslem League, was a potent fraternity 90,000,000 strong. For reasons that must be the main subject or directive of following chapters in this book, the Moslems replied, "That's a very good idea in its way, but what sort of niche are we to fill in the mould? We know these Congressmen and their politics : we know how high are their hopes of power at the Centre. We cannot be co-signatories to the freehold of this future house of theirs until we know more about its interior lay-out, drainage, distribution of warmth and light : what space we are to have in it for ourselves and our children : how much privacy and liberty we shall enjoy in it, and so on. Of these things we must have guarantees."

And that is just the sort of question the Congress cannot and will not answer, and never has answered in durable good faith. Though it has not always shrunk from the detail of constructive planning, evasion is its more common habit. Perhaps its best effort was the contribution of Pandit Motilal Nehru—father of Jawaharlal—and other Congress delegates to the draft Constitution devised for

India in the All-Parties Report of 1927, but this was a skirmish rather than a real attack on difficulties, and a mixture of bad faith, indifference and hostility very soon made the Report a dead letter. For some years, now, the Congress has at times suggested or demanded that a free constituent assembly be convened—by a franchise not yet explained in detail—to debate and draft another new Constitution. The Government uttered no objection to this idea : I was once authorized to report its acquiescence. Only two things can have prevented the Congress from repeating in this way, on its own initiative, the experiment of 1927. One obstacle was its lack of confidence in the party's ability to make a success of the venture, even when Congressmen felt sure of commanding a majority in the assembly. Another was the minorities' suspicion that this majority might Nazify the assembly or its results.\*

For though it likes to dodge the ardours and responsibilities of really constructive effort, a worse trait in the Congress of recent decades has been its backsliding from the only important agreements or proposals it has contributed to constitutional advance. Not all of these proposals were perfectly sound, perhaps, but the imperfections of some were a lesser mischief than the party's repeated proofs of its unreliability. Here are a few examples :

(i) The electoral system confirmed by the Government of India Act, 1919, was inspired by the Lucknow Agreement of 1916-17 between the Congress party and the Moslem League. The pact established the principle of separate electorates, whereby a minority has seats reserved for it in the legislature and the voters of each community vote only for candidates of their own faith. There are obvious faults in this method, but in Appendix I you will find cogent defence of it by men far greater than I can ever be. The Moslems insist on it, the Sikhs like it. And anyhow, Indian communalism being what it is, you can imagine how bloody the strife might

\* The Council of the Moslem League formally condemned the scheme in July 1938. The Cripps proposals of 1942 revived the idea, with the safeguards mentioned early in my first chapter.

become in joint constituencies where one community hotly and consistently opposed the election of another's favourites. So the Lucknow Agreement was a Good Thing, a solid achievement for India's benefit, to the credit of the Congress party. Yet from party press and platform the very system it confirmed has been assailed again and again by prominent Congress publicists. They condemned it in the party's election manifesto in 1936. The Congress Government of Bombay sought to undermine it.

(ii) Since the principle of separate electorates had been conceded and confirmed by request of the country's strongest minority, no one could deny it fairly to weaker communities claiming it on similar grounds. Yet the second Round Table Conference of 1931 found Gandhi seeking a bargain with the Moslems on the terms that he would concede them what they had already if they would join him in denying separate electorates to the European community, the Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and *Depressed Classes*. The Moslems gave the only proper answer, but that did not halt Gandhi. He insisted that the Depressed Classes must vote in joint electorates with the Hindus who outcaste them, and must have no seats reserved for them in the legislatures. He said that if the conference and the Government supported the Untouchables against him, he would starve himself to death.

(iii) This threat was disregarded : the Government's Communal Award was based on the majority's agreement at the Conference. In due course Gandhi began, in prison, his "fast unto death" by way of protest. The unfortunate Hindus were terrified. One of them—a statesman by no means fond of Gandhi's politics—told me that according to their beliefs the guilt of Gandhi's death would be on all their heads because his fast was directed at them, however unfairly. They called a hurried conference and prepared a new scheme of representation for the Untouchables. In principle it differed from the original plan only to the extent that after primary elections in their own separate constituencies the Un-

touchable candidates so chosen must stand again in joint electorates—competing with caste Hindus—before it was finally determined who should represent them. The number of seats reserved for them was practically doubled—at the cost, in Bengal, of caste Hindus who were not represented in the negotiations. Gandhi declared himself satisfied, and broke his fast. To all intents and purposes he had achieved the opposite of what he had promised to do ; but he had proved by a method many critics likened to blackmail, that he could wield a power some dictators might envy.\* (In April, 1938, he said : “ For the first time in my public and private life I seem to have detected a flaw in me which is unworthy of a votary of truth.”) We shall see, later, whether the Depressed Classes gained as much by the new arrangement as at first appeared likely.

(iv) Early in 1930, when Gandhi began his *katabasis* to extract contraband salt from the ocean, he solemnly promised that India should have Dominion status in a month or see his body drowned in the waves. In the Spring of 1931 he was saying : “ We shall have complete independence in the next few months : Sardar Vallabhai [then President of the Congress] and myself will be behind prison bars.” That was six weeks after his famous Delhi Pact with Lord Irwin, approved by the Congress, had brought a truce to civil disobedience. The assurance of complete independence in a few months may be compared with the pact’s operative clauses. These declared the principal objects of the agreement to be :

(a) “ the participation of the representatives of the Congress in the further discussions that are to take place on

\* Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, sometime an official of the Congress party said that “ a simple consequence ” of Gandhi’s tactics was “ the total suspension of judgment, the paralysis of reason, and the emergence of absolute credulity in the affairs of the nation.” In 1937 Gandhi condemned such fasts—by other people—on principle. In 1939 the Congress Working Committee declared that if prisoners could get their freedom by hunger-striking, orderly government would become impossible ; and Gandhi added that “ if a prisoner decides to starve himself to death, he should in my opinion be allowed to do so.” Gandhi has repeated the experiment since he so wrote.

the scheme of constitutional reform"—already begun at the first Round Table Conference in London.

(b) to affirm that "of the scheme there outlined Federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India and for such matters as, for instance, defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India and the discharge of obligations."

(c) "the effective discontinuance of all activities in furtherance of civil disobedience, by whatever methods pursued."

(d) that "those who have given up, during a time of political excitement, the sale or purchase of British goods must be left free without any restraint to change their attitude," but might be subjected to "the type of picketing allowed in the ordinary law" in support of Indian industries.

Pretexts were soon discovered for moderate disloyalty to clauses (c) and (d). As for (a) and (b), Federation within the meaning of the pact was condemned in 1937, on the motion of a Congress Minister, in every legislature where the Congress had a majority. "Why? Partly, it seems, because of those "reservations or safeguards." If there is disagreement among Indians *inter se*, and between them and the British Government, on the meaning of India's "interests," "obligations," the fatal words "for instance" and the safeguards needed to cover them, Lord Irwin and Gandhi must share the credit for unavoidable and prudent ambiguity on a matter of opinion. "Indian responsibility and reservations" means something less than complete responsibility: it could mean less than the provincial autonomy now operating. Its significance was plain to honest Jawaharlal Nehru, at any rate. In a chapter on the Delhi Pact, in his autobiography, he says that Clause 2, with its references to safeguards, gave him a tremendous shock. He complained to Gandhi, but ought to have foreseen the result:

<sup>7</sup> "Gandhiji . . . interpreted Clause 2 of the agreement in a particular way so as to make it fit in with our demand for independence, relying chiefly on the words in it: 'in

the interests of India.' The interpretation seemed to me a forced one, and I was not convinced."

No wonder : but Gandhi's interpretations are often like that. The safeguards were duly catalogued four years later in the Government of India Act, and the minorities generally welcomed them. Gandhi, on the other hand, sought to make them a pretext for threatening a constitutional crisis when provincial autonomy was born in April, 1937. He decided, suddenly, that his party must not take office where it commanded a majority in the legislatures unless the Governors agreed to waive their discretionary powers. These powers are not, perhaps, unquestionable ; but in principle they were among the least of the reservations contemplated in an agreement signed voluntarily by Gandhi's own hand and ratified by the Congress party at its plenary conference the same month. They were not waived, but the Congress did take office.

(v) Its Ministries resigned two years later in dutiful agreement with the party executive's opposition to Indian participation in the war. Here again—to put it mildly—it has been hard to make consistent sense of Congress policy. On September 9th, 1939, the All-India Congress Committee "condemns Fascism and Nazi aggression." Gandhi and other leaders of the party have often said such things as these, given in Gandhi's own words : "My sympathies are wholly with the Allies" . . . "The defeat of Britain will be a calamity" "If the Allies are defeated, India will be thrown into confusion and anarchy from which it may not recover for a long time, in the course of which India may become disintegrated and fall a prey to foreign invasion." On October 22nd, 1939, the Congress Working Committee called on the Ministries to resign because the party "cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for this would amount to endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end" On September 15th, 1940, in an otherwise unhelpful resolution, the same committee decreed that "the spirit of *satyagraha*

(passive resistance) forbids Congress from doing anything with a view to embarrass the British nation in the face of danger." A few days later, in the name of Congress, Gandhi was insisting on the right of Congressmen to "call upon people throughout the country to refrain from assisting India's war effort," and many of the party have earned imprisonment, since then, by propaganda against the war\* or by physical violence against the defence of India in her greatest peril.

All this and much else would seem to vindicate the Indian minorities and Liberals in doubt of the Congress party's dependability, moral and political. We shall see they have other reasons for mistrust of its ultimate aims and possible methods.

#### *Other Horst Wessels*

Congress rules require absolute non-violence by its members. I may be wrong, but to me it has seemed that some of Gandhi's varying explanations leave room for doubt whether this policy springs more from moral principle and conviction than from awareness of its tactical value as an expedient for harassing the mad English. Let us give the party benefit of the doubt, save for its spasm of widespread, organized violence and

\* Contrast the Congress attitude with a more representative selection of contrary opinions. The Punjab Legislative Assembly passed by 104 votes to 39 a resolution pledging unconditional support to Great Britain : in the Bengal Legislative Assembly a similar resolution was carried by 142 votes to 82 : in Sind the Council of Ministers conveyed to the Governor an unconditional offer of all the province's resources for the war effort. Mohammedans predominate in these three provinces, but their Moslem Premiers carried on with coalition, non-communal Governments. The National Liberal Federation of India appealed to all Indians to give "ungrudging and unconditional support to Great Britain." Similar expressions came from Mr. M. C. Rajah on behalf of the Depressed Classes ; many prominent Sikhs ; the Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha ; the Central Council of the Democratic Swaraj Party ; and the All-India Conference of Indian Christians. The Executive Council of the Independent Labour Party declared that "the present is not the proper occasion for withholding co-operation from Great Britain . . . A better and more satisfactory response with regard to aspirations of the Indian people would have come from the British Government if the Congress had tried to bring about unity among the different communities and section in the country."<sup>3</sup> See also Appendix IV to this book.

sabotage in the late summer of 1942. Certainly there have been astonishing demonstrations of passive resistance by Congressmen under great temptation to something more strenuous. But long before 1942 they had experimented with rioting and extreme violence—when local officers of the party instigated a horrible slaughter at Sholapur, for instance—and you need not search diligently for evidence that other violations of the rule are winked at, to say the least, by the party boasting of it.

Two conspicuous tributes to violence were my introduction to the non-violent Congress at its Karachi conference in 1931. The entrance to the camp was a make-shift, shabbily ornate affair called the Martyrs' Gate. It was a memorial to Congressmen whose deaths could be attributed, in one way or another, to the party's efforts, and portraits of them were crudely painted on it. Some of them had courted and earned violent ends. One of these was a fellow called Bhagat Singh : his picture had to be improvised at the last moment. With two companions he decided to kill a certain British police officer. Instead, thanks to careless identification, he murdered another, 19 years old, who had not been in India long enough to bother anyone. Bhagat Singh ambushed him and shot him down as he pedalled by on a bicycle ; emptied a revolver into him as he lay in the road ; ran away, and killed an Indian constable who chased him.

Nothing more was seen or heard of him until he appeared in the public gallery of the Legislative Assembly at Delhi, threw a bomb to the floor of the House, and wounded a member or two. That was the end of his exciting career. When at last he was executed—after a trial dramatized politically to the last degree—the floodgates of sob-stuff were opened, and for a time Bhagat Singh became the Congress party's hero-saint.

He was hanged on the eve of the party conference at Karachi, but I did not know this when I reached the entrance to the Congress camp. The "volunteers" posted there asked me quite politely to doff my hat and

not to wear it in the camp. I asked why. "Because we're in mourning." I jumped to the conclusion that this must be for Motilal Nehru. He had died not long before, and the camp was named Motilal Nagar after him. He had deservedly been everyone's friend, and I was glad to salute his memory, so I began to walk about the camp with my hat under my arm. But the sun grew hot and strong, and I was obliged to cover my head again. A "volunteer" stopped me, pointed to his bare head, and said, "For Bhagat Singh."

I called on the late J. M. Sen Gupta and his wife, in their camp hut. He was a member of the Congress Working Committee. With him were a few other delegates to the rally. He was handed a telegram, addressed to the Working Committee. He read it with a wry face, and passed it to me. It was from "Moslem Defence League, Cawnpore," and said Mohammedans were being slaughtered in communal riots that had begun in Cawnpore that morning. Others in the hut seemed to agree that this was unfortunate, and they uttered deprecating murmurs. Mrs. Sen Gupta, however, was deeply shocked and grieved.

The origin of the riots was scarcely in dispute. In February a Mohammedan shopkeeper at Benares had irritated Congress pickets by asserting his unquestionable right to sell foreign cloth. He was shot dead, and the usual trouble followed. A month later, in an obscure village of the same province, a Moslem landlord sent a haunch of venison to a tenant. Some Hindus said the meat was beef—the flesh of an animal they consider sacred—and Hindu villagers accordingly killed eleven Mohammedans. In the middle of March, nine days before the Karachi meeting, there was another riot in Agra. These events naturally aggravated existing anxieties and tension among the Mohammedans of Cawnpore. Then came the execution of Bhagat Singh, and immediate efforts by Congressmen to enforce a general *hartal* (closing of shops) in his honour, whether people approved of him or not.

I have an account by a Congressman, prominent in the town, of the way the rioting began. He admitted it was due to the aggression of his party's "volunteers" and rabble, who as a political instrument resembled very slightly the Nazi S.A. and Hitler Youth in Germany. They tried to make Mohammedan shopkeepers close their shops, and men and women walk instead of driving through the streets, in mourning for a murderer. Persuasion became stone-throwing, some of its victims retaliated, and soon the trouble developed into horrible bloodshed. Women were raped first, then disembowelled, sometimes burnt alive. Ten thousand people fled to the surrounding country. A conservative estimate put the number butchered at over four hundred, but eye-witnesses familiar with the town's bewildering topography thought that at least 600 were killed. The police register recorded 2,000 known crimes in the week.

The Karachi session coincided almost exactly with the duration of the riots at Cawnpore. There was never the least room for doubt of the Congress perspective. There were speeches galore about Bhagat Singh ; his poor old father was ushered into the rostrum to feed emotion still further, but spoke so long that the crowd's impatience with him became audible ; Gandhi was criticized for failing to get the murderer reprieved. There was no discussion whatever of a resolution deplored the Cawnpore massacre : no voice tried to suggest how repetitions of it might be avoided.

The affair of Bhagat Singh, and Congress reactions at Karachi, launched a campaign in the party's press for the glorification of executed assassins. Terrorists were busy in Bengal at that time, and in the Congress journalese of the period it became most noble (*fortissimo*) to follow Bhagat Singh to the gallows, though it was naughty (*mezzo-forte* or *piano*) to do the things that led to the gallows. The Calcutta Corporation, dominated by a Congress majority, adjourned in "homage" to an assassin caught red-handed. A whole page of the *Municipal Gazette* was devoted in his honour to the adjourn-

ment resolution and a photograph of him. If you say the authors of these encouraging eulogies intended their natural effect, you accuse them of lying, for they denied it. If you accept their denial, you accuse them of amazing stupidity.

Surjya Sen directed the slaughter of a dozen people in a raid on European quarters of Chittagong in April, 1930 ; the bombing of a whist drive at Pahartali two years later, when an old Eurasian woman was murdered ; the killing of Captain Cameron, and other violent activities. Surjya Sen was secretary of the Chittagong Congress Committee, and a party of his gangsters started their original raid from the local Congress office.

In a great speech to the Indian Central Legislature in March, 1935, Sir N. N. Sircar, an eminent Indian lawyer, cited these and fifty-three other terrorist murders, bombings, dacoities and conspiracies whose ringleaders were proved in open Court to be office-bearers or accredited workers in various local branches of the Congress party. Sir Nripendra named them all (see *L.A. Official Report*, Vol. IV of 1935, pp. 3101—3111). Here are a few typical examples :

In the final attempt on the life of Sir Charles Tegart one of the conspirators later convicted was a Congress member of the Calcutta Corporation.

An active member of the Joyanagar Congress Committee was sentenced to transportation for his admitted part in the conspiracy to murder Sir Alfred Watson, Editor of *The Statesman*.

Members of the Congress executives in four different Districts were among those convicted of murdering Inspector Tarini Mukerji, shooting Inspector Sasanka Bhattacharji, trying to murder Mr. Cassells, and conspiring to kill Mr. Graham and Sir John Anderson.

Two Indian police officers at Chechua Hat were dragged out of the houses where a mob had driven them to shelter, and were cudgelled and burned to death. The Court found that the ringleaders in this attack were Congress Volunteers, and their Captain was sentenced to (nominal) transportation for life.

In the Naldanga dacoity case, where the loot was Rs. 8,000 seized by armed violence, the principal convicts were the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Naldanga Congress Committee, and the Assistant Secretary and other members of the Gailbandha Congress Committee.

Two well-known members of the Madaripur Congress Committee robbed a post office at the point of the revolver, and shot some of the Mohammedan villagers who chased them. The villagers were armed with nothing more deadly than clods of earth.

This was a brave speech, for Sir Nripendra was a Bengali Hindu with little love of the Moslems, and just about 99 per cent. of the terrorists he named were Bengali Hindus. (Moslem students offered themselves as a bodyguard for Sir Alfred Watson after the attempts on his life.)

No one should let these reflections prejudice him against a particular community containing very many most admirable, lovable men and women—far more than some people will admit. Heaven forbid that we should let Hindu terrorism warp our judgment when and if we must adjudicate again on communal rivalries. Perhaps, if India had been governed by some other Power that we did not greatly like, we ourselves would have called the terrorists patriotic nationalists, and given them some overt sympathy. But in that case would we necessarily have been right beyond doubt? Do we call it evidence of patriotism, that a single party uses its arms to establish its own oligarchy? If we had seen a foreign power trying to do justice between the Indian communities; if it had found, as we do, that the effort at its best almost inevitably dissatisfied *all* the communities; then I hope we should not have criticized it for listening at least as patiently to the Moslem minority as to the Hindu majority. But there are other things to be considered, too.

In the extracts from Sir N. N. Sircar's catalogue I have mentioned some of the dacoities he referred to. Crimes of this sort have been the most frequent manifestation of Hindu terrorism, but they seldom attract notice in England because their victims are not Europeans

or Government servants of rank. Nearly all dacoities in this category are robberies with violence by armed gangs, to finance the terrorist movement or discourage opposition. Most of the victims are humble, peaceable Indian citizens—obscure villagers, for instance, not at all interested in party politics and in no way connected with the Government. Their only “offence” has been possession of something the terrorists wanted, or a distaste for uproarious agitation.

One cannot reasonably quarrel with those who fear that violence, unless controlled by proper authority, may become in India what it has been inside Germany and Italy—a political instrument for the subjection of all and sundry to a single party’s will. It seems unlikely that the Congress will ever identify itself formally with such a campaign, or give it the united weight of the party’s support. Nobody imagines the Congress as such would ever achieve or aspire to the barbarous efficiency of Nazidom. Its experiment a few years ago with a para-military organization, imitating the early Nazi model, was not a success : only 25,000 joined this “army,” even under the Congress Government in the United Provinces. Still, there it was, and the other facts I have mentioned speak for themselves. So did the knives and other weapons that Congressmen used with deadly effect against villagers heckling them at a meeting in the Punjab (see Coupland’s *Indian Politics*, 1936–1942, p. 45). It is true—and good—that England has heard very little indeed about ordinary terrorism in self-governing Bengal. That may be due to one or all of many things—to autonomy ; to a hang-over from Sir John Anderson’s firmness ; to the fear of Moslem reprisals for attacks on a preponderantly Mohammedan regime ; to weariness ; or to a genuine change of heart for the better. But it was tactless of Congressmen to abuse Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, then Bengal Home Minister and later Premier, for reminding the provincial legislature that “the terrorist movement had not ended, secret organizations had not given up their stores of arms, and writings in the Press

continued to balaud detenus and political prisoners as heroes and martyrs." His supreme vindication was the campaign, under Congress auspices, against Allied communications with the battle-front on Bengal's threshold in 1942. And on March 3rd, 1945—when once again the Bengal parliament rejected a Congress proposal for the release of all political prisoners—Sir Nazimuddin said he knew there were still "some people not only in touch with the Japanese but also trying to help them."

So here again is cause for anxiety, among political and communal minorities in India, about the intentions or possible developments of Congress policy. Inferences from my next chapter may seem less hypothetical.

## CHAPTER IV

### PEOPLE, PRINCES, AND PARTIES

#### *Egalité, Fraternité*

SOME years ago a Primary Education Bill was introduced in the Bengal Legislature. The Moslems wanted it: the biggest Hindu party, backed by the Congress Press, resisted it strenuously. The opposition's assistant stage-manager was an old Hindu who in earlier times had been a firebrand of the patriotic movement. I said to him: "You don't like the Bill, because you're afraid it may make the Moslems as well educated as your own people?" "Well," he said, "perhaps that's it."

A few good people retort that there is little communal feeling among the youth of India, so "give youth a chance." I hope they are right, though it is cold comfort to know that this blessed state of mind may desert a man when he is mature enough for a position of responsibility. But I have not always found it in youth. It was a 19-year-old Mahrratta—a delightful, capable fellow, and a devoted follower of Gandhi—who suddenly told me one

day : " Grrrr ! I think I hate the Moslems even more than I hate the British !"

I have mentioned the Lucknow agreement, between Congress and Moslems, on the principle of separate electorates. I have met one or two young Moslems who dislike the system, though their people generally insist on it. I have discussed it with young Hindus who condemned it. Most of these seemed at first to be taking their stand on the best principles of democracy and responsibility ; but their argument would boil down in the end to resentment that the system gives Moslems a chance they might never have if Hindus were allowed to vote against them. They (my Hindu friends) cannot be content that they have unchallenged supremacy in a majority of the eleven provinces, and are assured of a majority in the Federal Parliament, if there is one. You have seen what the Congress says about separate electorates \*

You remember how the Government was criticised for its handling of civil disobedience and terrorism. With extravagant violence the Congress accused it of satanic repression, of preferring strict discipline to liberalism, or at least of stickling for the letter of the law. More temperate criticism came from the British Labour party, whose second Cabinet was ultimately responsible for much of the repression. This comment was right, sometimes. So also, very occasionally, were the Conservatives who attacked Labour and National Governments for not ruling India adequately. Here are comments of the kind that irritated Congressmen :

" Government officials have sometimes forgotten, or remembered after considerable mischief has been done, that their *first* duty is to maintain law and order and punish law-breakers, whoever they may be "

" It is the elementary duty of Government to protect the fundamental rights of a citizen."

" So this was the result of the District Magistrate's

\* I do not pretend that *all* Hindus damn separate electorates, nor that all Hindu enemies of the system object to it on the insufficient grounds quoted above. But I have said enough about it.

efforts to bring about a compromise by conciliating the party who was out to resist the lawful exercise of a right by the other party. This habit of making unreasonable demands has been a matter of recent growth in the — community, and if the degree of unreasonableness is increasing, that is because there has been no want of encouragement to help the growth of this habit. It is a matter of common knowledge that the more a man gets the more he wants. If the authorities had assumed a stern attitude from the very beginning towards the resistance offered by —, the subsequent fracas would in all probability have never happened."

You will guess, perhaps, that these are quotations from the old *Morning Post* or Tory M.P.s ; or the second might well have been the Government's answer to Congress pickets who tried to deny Indian shoppers "the lawful exercise of a right" to buy what they wished. In fact, all three are extracts from leading articles in prominent Congress newspapers. They relate to two incidents of 1935-36. In each instance certain Mohammedans resisted by force, and "the other party" defended by force, the destruction of a mosque by owners of the ground on which it stood. Few Congressmen, when engaged in civil disobedience, ever suggested it was the *first* duty of the British Government to maintain law and order and punish anti-Government law-breakers.

But nowhere has the party's inconsistency, on this and connected subjects, been more suggestive and disturbing than in its attitude to the 500-odd Indian Princes and princelings, States and statelets. They must have a notice, for they cannot be left out of our complete picture.

#### *Indian States*

Hyderabad and Kashmir, the two largest of the Indian States, are each nearly as big as Great Britain : the smallest are very much smaller than Hyde Park. Hyderabad has the greatest population, over 16,300,000 ; the second, Mysore, has 7,330,000 ; but others at the bottom of the scale have a mere platoonful or so. Together the States have about 93,000,000 people, or nearly a quarter

of India's total, and cover 40 per cent. of the whole sub-continent. Also they cross, divide and pepper it so thoroughly that British India proper is scarcely recognizable as a geographical entity, and could hardly maintain its present existence as a political unit if the Princes had a mind or power to prevent it.

What several of them have done, by power and inclination, is shocking misrule of their own people. That truism is now acknowledged by everyone who knows anything about the facts. Sometimes the misrule is positive tyranny and atrocity, sometimes stupid indifference and neglect. The better States publish their Budgets because they can and dare. In the following table I have translated into sterling certain items of expenditure charged to revenue in six of these Budgets a few years ago :

<i>State and Population.</i>	<i>Ruler's Civil List and "Extras"</i>	<i>Medical Services.</i>	<i>Education.</i>	<i>Irrigation and similar Benefits.</i>
A 5,100,000	£ 116,462	£ 101,504	£ 361,400	£ 233,150
B 6,600,000	176,900	109,390	406,000	215,380
C 2,650,000	98,048	19,046	32,137	35,820
D 940,000	118,125	18,085	21,861	85,154
E 750,000	40,076	12,923	25,230	51,300
F 317,000	90,000	3,400	13,060	—

So here were six rulers drawing an average income of about £106,600 from their subjects, while in return their 16,350,000 people got the equivalent of 2s. 3d each, on average, in medical, educational and sundry other services. A and B, who very seldom come to England, are two of the four most generous Princes in India. Others would not dream of competing with them in the equitable use of taxes.

For all these reasons—geographical, political, economic, social—you might suppose that a party professing to speak for *all* India would have given at least a fifth of its active interest to the Indian States and their subjects. “Today,” said Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography, “they represent probably the extremest type of autocracy existing in the world.” He was not strictly fair, for some of the States have shown how admirable a benevolent autocracy can be, and three of them are far ahead of British India in popular education, for example. But the truth was near enough to excuse his complaint about his own party’s attitude, had he himself not missed his best opportunity of setting a different example.

“When such conditions prevail in the Indian States [Jawaharlal wrote] it would have been natural for the Congress to stand up for the elementary rights of the people of the States and to criticize their wholesale suppression. But Gandhiji fathered a novel policy on the Congress in regard to the States—the ‘policy of non-interference in the internal administration of the States.’ This hush-hush policy has been adhered to by him in spite of the most extraordinary and painful occurrences in the States.”

The policy may be defended with the argument that the Congress, born and bred in British India, must first get rid of the lesser evil at Delhi that protects the Princes, and only then be free to “invade” the States. But since Jawaharlal wrote his book the party, under Gandhi’s tutelage, has swayed and wobbled between decisions for and against non-intervention. At its annual conference in January 1938, it formally disapproved of “interference from without,” and the Working Committee reaffirmed

this ruling eight months later. Early in 1939 an abrupt somersault set Congressmen pecking energetically at sundry States, and giving orders to the Princes at large. Gandhi fixed attention on his campaign and "fast unto death" against a disreputable ruler of Rajkot, a territory about the size of England's smallest county. The fast was intended to force the ruler into accepting a Reforms Committee whose chairman and majority would be of the Congress party, selected by Gandhi himself. The Viceroy intervened against the ruler ; Moslem subjects pressed their claim to a fair part in the subsequent negotiations, and Gandhi suddenly abandoned Rajkot, with apologies to all concerned, declaring himself once more opposed to "direct interference." Some weeks later he published excellent views on "the minimum that all Princes should guarantee in order to come into line with enlightened opinion in British India."

More blatant than this wobbling, however, was the motive of inconsistent "interferences" by Congressmen a few years ago. There was a sequence of agitations in certain States, notably Kashmir, Kapurthala, Alwar, Bahawalpur, Loharu and Malerkotla. Nobody can reasonably doubt that the popular party in each instance had legitimate and serious grievances ; more serious than British India's, for the States concerned were not within sight of reforms that British India had enjoyed and been improving for a long time. Almost to a man (though not quite) writers in the party press and other Congress publicists made their opinions loud and clear. They supported Hindu agitation against the Moslem rulers of Bahawalpur, Loharu and Malerkotla. With equal or greater zest they backed the Hindu ruler of Kashmir and the Sikh Maharaja of Kapurthala against malcontent Moslem majorities. It is true they also attacked the Government of Mysore, with its Hindu Maharaja and Moslem Premier, but Moslems are only just over 6 per cent. of Mysore's population. Some Congress publicists even tried to defend the late and infamous ruler of Alwar—perhaps because his Moslem

minority undertook the brunt of opposition to his tyranny.

The rot began with the Kashmir business. I must beg your indulgence for the story, since I believe that here and in others like it you will find cogent, unpleasant evidence to support the arguments of this book : and because Kashmir should be part of Pakistan.

*In the "Happy Valley"*

Kashmir is one of the loveliest regions on earth ; and here I shall be writing almost exclusively about Kashmir proper, not the sister province of Jammu. The whole State, including Jammu, is rather bigger than England-cum-Scotland. In 1931-32 it had about 3,600,000 people, or roughly the same number as the Bengal district of Dacca, which is thirty times smaller. It has nothing comparable with the commercial riches of Bengal, its potential resources are neglected, and there are no great mercantile houses like Calcutta's. Yet Bengal complained justly of its taxation, while the Kashmiris were paying about twice as much per head of population ; 3.5 per cent. of them were literate, as against the 9.5 per cent. in all India. Less than 2 per cent. of the Moslem majority were literate. In the improved conditions of a few years later, the State Government's annual allowance for education was about ninepence a head, and for hospitals and medical services about fourpence-halfpenny per head. In return the people had to pay (among other things) an average of eighteenpence each a year for the upkeep of their ruler and his Minister-in-Waiting. The Maharaja cost them about twelve times the amount of the Viceroy's salary. His entertainment of Lord Linlithgow for ten days in 1936 cost them three times the sum (£5,230) allocated by the State budget to "beneficent" Industrial Departments.

A fraction over 77 per cent. of the State's people are Mohammedan—61.5 per cent. in Jammu, and 95 per cent. in Kashmir province. But the ruling dynasty is of Dogra stock, a fine warrior caste of Hindus, and the governing

class are Brahmin Hindus known here as Pandits. These had ample opportunities of applying the screw or pulling strings as moneylenders, petty village officials, revenue agents and so on, and so could give adequate expression to their religious prejudice and officious authority against the Mohammedans. There was jobbery, nepotism, patronage, and pinpricks galore for its victims.

Some of the State's laws, whether resented or not, seem symptomatic of mediæval bigotry. Nothing in the creed of the great Kashmiri majority forbids the eating of beef, veal or the like. It might do them good, if they could afford it and were accustomed to it. But because the ruling clique is of different faith, Section 219 of the State Penal Code provided that:

"If anyone intentionally slaughters or kills a cow, bull or calf or similar animal he shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to seven years, and a fine. The fine may amount to five times the value of the cow as assessed by the Judge [probably a Hindu] ; and

"If anyone has in his possession meat of the slaughtered or killed animal as aforesaid, knowing that it is prohibited meat, he shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to one year, and also with a fine which may amount to Rs. 500" (£37 10s.)

In 1937 a Jammu Mohammedan was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for killing a cow. A court of appeal reduced the punishment to one year. At this the Hindus were furious, held indignation meetings, and organized turbulent processions.

I find the following among notes written when trouble had broken out in 1931 :

"The Gaddis of Jammu pay a fixed tax of two annas a year per head of sheep or goat, whereas the *bakriwalas* pay thirty annas rising by three annas a year. It is said that nearly all the Gaddis of Jammu are Hindus, while the *bakriwalas* and others paying the higher tax are Moslems.

"All proprietary rights in land are vested in the State alone. In Kashmir proper, I understand, a tenant may transfer his holding to a relative but to no one else. If

he vacates his tenancy (when he migrates from the State, for instance) his land and tenure automatically revert to the State, and he receives in return an amount equal to one year's revenue. The same price is paid when the State Government confiscates land for its own purposes or amusement. It appears that the revenue is fixed at an eighth of the estimated value of the land's average yearly produce. If, then, at the time of the tenant's entry into occupation the produce for some years has been assessed at an average of a thousand rupees, he has to pay Rs. 125 in annual revenue (£9 7s. 1d.). And that is the amount of solace given him in the event of arbitrary confiscation.

"The Government agents—commonly called Pandits—often insist on payment in kind. I know of one who does this when a tenant has the necessary cash, and in fixing the amount of produce demanded the agent has all the advantages of literate authority over oppressed illiterates. The system sometimes favours the tenant, of course; but there are occasions when his whole stock is confiscated for revenue, so that next year his funds are short of at least the amount of revenue again due from him. This is again collected in kind, therefore, and to keep body and soul together the tenant is driven to his local moneylender, who may be a petty Pandit official, and who may demand interest up to 25 per cent. a month."

Thousands of the peasantry never had a square meal, or anything like it. Mulk Raj Anand, in one of his short stories, calls the State a land "where, though nature is kind and generous, man has for centuries most foully and cruelly oppressed man." An hyperbole; but Sir Albion Bannerjee, also a Hindu and for a brief period Prime Minister of Kashmir, has spoken strongly of the misery, misrule and oppression in the State.

Quite suddenly the people seemed to think they need not take all this lying down. What actually started them off may never be known. There was talk of an "insult to the Holy Quran" in a police barracks at Jammu, and of a Hindu officer's impetuous interference with the usual Friday prayers in a mosque. Sentiment began to sizzle.

The State's Prime Minister at the time was a popular British official. He went to the source of the trouble, and made what was to have been an interim report. In this he seems to have suggested that the people concerned had some grounds for complaint. He was bundled out of the State almost immediately, and a certain Pandit was made Prime Minister in his place. There cannot often have been a more inopportune appointment.

The fuse began to burn in earnest. It was fanned by the first comedian of the revolt, a cook called Abdul Qadir, and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, an ex-school-master. Abdul Qadir delivered impassioned harangues in Srinagar, and was duly imprisoned. The mosques resounded with echoes of his speeches. A crowd of his admirers made informal and unconventional application for *habeas corpus* at the gaol's narrow outer door, where there was a small orchard. A terrified prison Governor turned out the guard to fire on them, and a few of them were killed.

The report of an inquiry committee was so obviously "inspired" that ridicule killed it in no time.

For a few months there was a deceptive calm. Whatever the reasons, the average Kashmiri Moslem has little more character or moral fibre than you see in his face, with its low, receding forehead, and mild, timid eyes. He was now supposed to be feeling cowed and submissive, as he had been for generations before. Perhaps he was ; but big meetings and speeches gave him Dutch courage, and one or two professional agitators entered from British India to exploit a magnificent chance.

State officials said that large bands of Moslems came into Srinagar from the countryside, many of them armed with axes and bent on mischief. This was exaggerated nonsense, as European residents declared. Meetings in the town, the glamour gathering round the name of Abdullah, may have attracted unusual crowds of people, and axes, though few and inconspicuous, were a normal part of wood-cutters' equipment. Ministers, officials and Pandits of the State, instinctively biased against the

great majority of its people, may have convinced themselves that the situation was critical. Mohammedanism was to them as Jewry to the Nazis, save that they and not the Moslems had the brains and money. Europeans perhaps underrated the danger of the agitation, though they would have thought it an intolerable nuisance to themselves if it had been serious. Whatever the trouble may have been, it was less disagreeable than the results of the steps taken to suppress it.

The Kashmir troops and police seemed to have been given licence to run amok, and with this well-armed backing the Pandits took courage to bait, beat and harass Moslems wherever they felt they could do it safely. Parties of cavalry and infantry went through the streets, calling on all Mohammedans to shout "*Maharajabahadur ki jai*" ("Sieg heil for the Führer," more or less) and hammering them when they liked. A squad of Lancers, for instance, invaded the little shop of an English dressmaker in her absence. They threw-about her stock and sewing-machines, ran upstairs, seized her clerk, and dragged him out into the road. One of them held him down while others twisted his neck, banged his head on the ground, kicked him in the stomach. An Englishwoman hurried to his rescue, stood over him, and soundly rated the soldiers. They barked at her, but went off.

A whipping "triangle" was brought out of the gaol and set up in the open grounds of a recent exhibition. Magistrates sat by it. Many Mohammedans seized in the streets or at their homes were taken there, strapped to the triangle, and summarily flogged while interested spectators looked on from wherever they could see. Three weeks after it I saw the marks of such a flogging on the hams of a man too old and infirm to have bothered anyone—many years, at any rate, above the maximum age at which the Criminal Procedure Code of India allows anyone to be whipped. He was a bit deaf, and may not have been quick enough to "heil" his ruler when police or soldiers called at his houseboat.

A Moslem doctor was driving down a street in his pony-cart. Pandits raised a hue and cry after him, much as Nazis seem to have hailed a Jew. He was chased, pulled down from the tonga, and beaten up. There was firing at crowds outside the principal mosque ; reports of firing from other small towns and villages in the valley, and all the excitement, of course, that comes with the wildest rumours.

The miniature reign of terror ended suddenly when a couple of British residents, despairing of getting the whole truth past the censor, said they themselves would take it to the Government of India if indiscriminate flogging and assaults were not stopped. But Islamabad, forty miles from Srinagar, had a bad day. How and why its trouble began will never be clear, for "superstition," says Holditch, "has made the Kashmiri timid, and tyranny has made him a liar." A Moslem procession moved through the streets towards a small mosque. The Mohammedans and the two European missionaries in the place said it was only a religious ceremony : local authorities and Pandits (also Kashmiri, of course) called it a dangerous political demonstration. At a right-angle turn in the street, just outside the mosque, a handful of Hindu soldiers fired into the procession. Twenty-two men and boys were killed, twenty were injured, and the average age of half the wounded was under fourteen. On these figures there was complete and astonishing agreement between official report, Moslem story, and the later evidence of my eyes at the Mission Hospital.

Next, on the Punjab side of the State boundary, Mohammedan *jathas* (politico-religious processions) made for Jammu to embarrass the Kashmir authorities. This was folly, unless the end justified the means. Communal rioting broke out in Jammu : *jathadars* poured in by the hundred, and were locked up in camps where they might die of starvation and cold. There was danger of seriously infectious mischief, and the Government of India at last sat up and took notice. British troops were sent to

Jammu city and Mirpur. They poured oil everywhere, so to speak, and without the least show of violence seemed to have settled the affair impartially once for all. They might have finished it, if they had been allowed to stay longer, for it had been a small matter compared with the flare-up that was to come in Jammu after they were withdrawn. This at last expedited important reforms that had been promised and postponed ; but that is another story.

### *Gander and Sauce*

Rightly or wrongly, let us suppose for argument's sake that independent witnesses, British and French, inclined for some reason to under-state the Kashmiri agitation, despite the bother it caused them. The fact remains that it was short-lived and never approached the scale or menace of analogous trouble in British India. Yet from the moment the Kashmiris first raised a suppliant voice in the summer of 1931, the reactions of the Congress in British India rapidly became lucid to the point of blatancy. Agitation for relief from British autocracy was one thing ; Moslem objections to despotism—and a Hindu despotism at that—were a different matter altogether. Only one important Hindu paper—1,500 miles from Srinagar, and always ready to take an independent line—could see the affair in perspective. The rest of the Congress Press loudly damned the Moslems, and backed the Kashmir authorities save when it complained they were not being repressive enough.

I can find no evidence that this attitude was openly supported by leaders of the party : they were preoccupied with the Round Table Conference. I cannot believe that Gandhi or Jawaharlal Nehru, himself a Kashmiri Pandit, altogether lacked sympathy with the Kashmiris' case. But neither of them, nor any other spokesman for their party, gave public sign of any feeling for Kashmiris in greater distress than theirs, or of disapproval of the Congress newspapers' concerted campaign.

In its Declaration of Fundamental Rights, passed at

Karachi about three months before trouble in Kashmir began, the Congress decreed that all citizens of India must have the right of free expression of opinion, association and combination ; freedom of conscience and the right "to freely profess and practise his religion" ; equality before the law irrespective of religion ; no disability by reason of religion, caste, creed or sex ; freedom to acquire property. It was resolved also that a Government of free India must observe neutrality in regard to all religions, introduce universal adult franchise, and provide free and compulsory primary education.

For some years every province in British India had had a legislature with an elected majority, and for several decades citizens of British India had enjoyed rights not yet known to the great majority of Kashmiris. Further large reforms were now on the way ; it was known they would give the provinces virtually complete and democratic Home Rule. Agitation for something still better continued.

The Kashmiris were less urgently ambitious. They asked only for some of the reforms that had come to British India years before ; and you have seen they had exceptional cause. They did not demand a wholly elective legislature : some of them wanted a working majority of elected members, others said they would be content with a fifty-fifty ratio of elected and nominated members. They desired "freedom of conscience," but while objecting to "disabilities by reason of religion" they never pressed their religious right to kill beef. They asked that taxation should be scaled down to approximate equality with its level in adjoining areas of British India. (The Congress had declared this level to be much too high.) The demands waxed a little fat on official resistance or evasion of them, and at one time became unreasonable as a proposition for immediate action—but never so ambitious as the Congress party's claims. I have shown they were not condemned by all Hindus : that was scarcely possible. But a Congress vernacular paper in Lahore interrupted its campaign for Indian liberties

to deride the Kashmiris' early demands. They seem to want everything, it said : as well might the State Government throw up the sponge as surrender to anything so preposterous.

When the Kashmiris had been pressing their case for four months, not the ten years or more of intensive agitation in British India, another Congress paper said :

" How long is the agitation against His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir and his Government to continue ? The Royal Proclamation read out by His Highness on the occasion of his birthday is proof positive of the Maharaja's statesmanship, devotion to justice and spirit of toleration."

A third frankly disapproved of the Srinagar floggings, but cried out for a firmer policy by the Kashmir authorities and inveighed against the Moslem claims.

Earlier that same summer, in a " charge-sheet " presented to the Government of India, Gandhi complained that punitive police had been posted in certain villages of British India at the villagers' expense. In one of Calcutta's Congress newspapers the Kashmir Government was urged to do exactly the same thing, at the Moslems' expense.

According to that inquiry committee whose report on the original disturbances was killed by ridicule, the State authorities " met the persistent policy of vilification with philosophic calm." This supposed phlegm—a virtue constantly enjoined on the Government of India in the teeth of persistent vilification by the Congress—was now criticised in Congress newspapers, e.g. :

" If the Kashmir administration was not guilty of any act of commission, it was guilty of an act of omission. It allowed the agitation to go too far, and it is this act of tolerance which the (Inquiry) Commission condemn . . . The unscrupulous agitators did not fail to take advantage of this leniency on the part of the administration when the Maharaja was absent from the State."

There have been rumours, now and then, that the British Government had in mind the retrocession of certain areas leased to it by Indian States. In one instance the

State concerned had a Mohammedan ruler, and the re-transfer, whether intended or not, was opposed by the Congress. But so was any thought of the converse in Kashmir :

“ The question which was asked in the British Parliament last Monday, as to whether the Government of India were considering the advisability of taking over administration of Kashmir, is in this connection very ominous. Sir Samuel Hoare replied in the negative. But the trend of the question goes to show a new source of danger to the integrity of this Indian State.”

To this was added a little gem of Congress-democratic logic :

“ Unless, therefore, the Hindus of India and the entire body of Indian chiefs become alert, the future of this Hindu principality is likely to be enveloped in darkness.”

I am not disputing the obligation of every Government to maintain law and order. I do not deny that authority in Kashmir, like the Government of India, had a duty to assert itself by all necessary means. I have suggested that the means employed sometimes exceeded necessity. But I hope the other point I wish to make is obvious and valid. With a freedom of the Press unknown to Kashmir, with far greater facilities for self-expression, with reforms in being and further advance assured, Congressmen agitated ostensibly for India’s democratic independence—and for reforms in States under Moslem rulers. Yet they also agitated *against* reforms for Kashmir, *against* the people crying out for reforms, both there and in Alwar and Kapurthala ; and they approved in Kashmir and Kapurthala the repression they damned in British India. Hindu autocrats or oligarchies ruled where progress might give Mohammedans those rights and majority voice which Hindus were soon to enjoy unchallenged in six British-Indian provinces. It seemed well to Congressmen, and presumably consistent with their dreams of Congress *raj*, that a Hindu despotism should continue where the alternative was something incompatible with Congress *raj*.

## CHAPTER V

### FASCISM IN ACTION

#### *Election*

Not unnaturally, it seemed difficult to decide how this *raj* was to be achieved : or at any rate it was not always so simple as the crisis of 1942 appeared to make it. In April 1942 the Congress Working Committee had an idea sufficiently described in Sir Stafford Cripps' broadcast after his negotiations had broken down. The Committee, he said, wanted "government for an indefinite period by a set of persons nominated by Indian parties, responsible to no legislature or electorate, incapable of being changed, and the majority of whom [a Congress majority, of course] would be in a position to dominate large minorities." But eleven years earlier the Congressman felt bound to be rather more circumspect. On the British side, as well as the Indian, argument could be protracted beyond the brief limits of a flying visit to Delhi ; and there was no imminent peril from the Japanese to encourage an effort at blackmailing the British Government or dragooning Indian opinion. So Gandhi, anyhow, evolved a scheme that Jawaharlal Nehru mentions in his autobiography. He is discussing a talk he had with Gandhi early in 1931 or thereabouts :

"I had imagined that the Congress, as such, would automatically cease to exist with the coming of freedom. He [Gandhi] thought that the Congress should continue, but on one condition : that it passed a self-denying ordinance, laying it down that none of its members could accept a paid job under the State, and if anyone wanted a post of authority in the State, he would have to leave the Congress. The whole idea underlying it was that the Congress, by its detachment and having no axe to grind, could exercise tremendous pressure on the Executive as well as other departments of the Government, and thus keep them on the right track."

Who was to decide what was the "right track"? Obviously the Congress, or, rather, the Congress Working Committee, a set of persons now nominated by its own President, responsible to no legislature other than its own party membership, and incapable of being changed except by the rare phenomenon of a hostile vote within the party. So the "right track" would be the Congress party's policy—the idiosyncrasy, perhaps, of a body refusing all responsibility for the administration and results of its policy. And, apart from what he called the open rebellion of 1942, the only clue to the "tremendous pressure" Gandhi had in mind is his old and continuing zest for civil disobedience—reinforced, perhaps, by occasional "fasts unto death." One supposes he meant these weapons to be applied against any Government, central or provincial, that carried with it the majority of an elected legislature in enacting measures the Congress disliked or opposing those that the Congress wanted; for Gandhi and Jawaharlal were looking ahead to the days when "freedom" would have brought India full responsible government.

If that was Gandhi's idea, or the dream of men who persuaded him to father it, here is an explanation of the group-within-the-party that stood out so long, first against agreeing to contest the elections of 1936-37, and then against accepting office where the Congress won. Perhaps it also helps to explain the ease with which Congress Ministers were led to the brink of resignation in 1938 and over it in 1939. But the party did contest the elections, it did take office. Congressmen had said the new Government of India Act would be worthless even as a step towards their goal. But since 1934 they had co-operated in the Central Legislative Assembly with a Constitution that was even worse; Gandhi had thought a detail of the coming regime was worth remedy by starvation (see pp. 36 and 37), so it was difficult to argue that the whole thing was beneath contempt. Besides, some consciences in the Congress thought much good could be done with the power of

ministerial authority and were genuinely anxious to start.

For a time, however, the question of the hour was whether the new Constitution should be exploited from within or attacked from without. After keen and sometimes heated debate a formal decision for or against acceptance of office was postponed till the elections had been held : voters for Congress candidates were not to be told, officially, whether they were electing workers or wreckers.\* Yet shortly before polling began the party published its legislative programme. The manifesto, though replete with unconscious humours and Irishisms, was drafted well, and sketched the outline of several admirable proposals. But it also said :

*"Every party or group that stands aloof from the Congress organisation tends, knowingly or unknowingly, to become a source of weakness to the nation and a source of strength to the forces ranged against it."*

Change only the party's title, and you may remember Hitler or Goebbels saying almost exactly the same. The mis-statement was significant, insolent nonsense.

I do not believe that jiggery-pokery, hanky-panky, corruption and other malpractices were as rife in the elections as some unkind people expected them to be. Nor were they confined to one party, as I heard for myself when a woman at a polling booth confessed she had forgotten which candidate she had been told to vote for, and a canvasser ruefully complained to me of a man who had failed him similarly in spite of repeated reminders. But in his presidential speech to the Congress a few months earlier Jawaharlal Nehru had called the party "a prey

\* Some of them had fair promises and omens already. In the summer of 1935 a drought had afflicted parts of Madras. Mr. Satyamurti, a Congress Brahmin with an immense capacity for speeches, toured the distressed regions, pointed to the parched land, river-beds and water-courses, and preached their lessons. Today, he said, they were dry and empty, but Congress *ay* would bring rain in abundance from the skies to fill the rivers and feed the crops. The Government of India Act received Royal Assent soon afterwards, and serious floods almost immediately swamped divers parts of the country.

to authoritarianism and a battleground for rival cliques stooping to the lowest and most objectionable tactics." If that was true of the Congress party's interior before the elections, it gives colour to evidence of "persuasion" derived among credulous people, new to election fevers, from the manifesto I have just quoted. And there were other devices. Of the 30,000,000 people enfranchised throughout India for the new dispensation, about half were illiterate. For these, different arrangements were made in different provinces. In some areas each party candidate had his own ballot box, painted a particular colour. An illiterate wishing to vote for so-and-so must drop his ballot paper or token in the green or the white box, as the case might be. A Congress canvasser sometimes would tell him that the green box contained the spirit of Gandhi or a favourite deity; if he put his paper into it with a mental supplication, his prayer would be answered.

Six provinces have bicameral legislatures. Their Upper Houses are not unimportant, for they have equal powers with the Lower; but they are small, represent a limited franchise, and may be left out of present accounts. There are 1,585 seats in the eleven other Houses, called Legislative Assemblies.\* Of these seats 206 were filled by unopposed candidates. For the remainder, 54.55 per cent. of the electorate voted. To the astonishment of those who knew nothing about the Pathans, the North-West Frontier Province did best with 72.8 per cent. (but had the smallest electorate by far). Then came Assam and the Punjab, where the Congress fared ill. Bengal was bottom with 40.5 per cent.

Polling by women varied remarkably. Here again the N.W.F.P. was top, for 71.4 per cent. of its female electorate voted, and Bengal again was worst at 5.2 per cent. In one or two places the enthusiasm of enfranchised women became quite violent.

\* The members of these eleven Houses are the electors designated in the Cripps plan to choose British India's representatives in the future "Constitution-making body."

Seven hundred and seventy-six of the 3,757 candidates forfeited their deposits, and several of them were treated most disrespectfully. For example .

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Number of Candidates.</i>	<i>Victor's Poll.</i>	<i>Next best Poll.</i>
Montgomery (Punjab)	Four	1,941	4
Muzaffarnagar West	Three	2,665	2
East Ferozepur	Three	2,123	2
Cawnpore Moslems	Three	659 <sup>1</sup>	1

(<sup>1</sup> Out of 26,137 electors.)

Here and there a candidate scored *nil*, absolutely

#### *In Office*

There was another skirmish, after the elections, before the Congress agreed to take office. Gandhi suddenly decided that it must hang back until Congress policy had been guaranteed security against the constitutional safeguards vested in the provincial Governors, e.g., on behalf of the minorities, financial solvency, etc. He wished, he said, "to strengthen the Congress in Ministerial office, pending the creation, by means consistent with the Congress creed, of a situation that would transfer all real power to the people." In later statements, as you shall see, he made it clear that by "the people" he meant his party. The immediate difficulty was negotiated satisfactorily after a few months, and Congress Ministries at last were launched.

They seemed to be going along quite well, at first. They did some of the good things that their critics had thought they never would do, and left undone all the silliest things that had been promised in the party's name. Though they snuffed-out a number of "repressive" laws they were glad, in times of communal or industrial strife, to invoke others that they had called monstrous, and to strengthen them in one or two places. Legislation

for the relief of indebted peasants, and to improve their security of tenure, was pushed forward in a number of provinces. One Ministry promptly devised means of short-circuiting the nepotism and favouritism that were expected to increase in appointments under their patronage. There was even something (or much) to be said for the first local tests of teetotalitarianism, though these attempts to enforce prohibition perhaps transgressed the scope of a single party's constitutional rights. In the words of *The Times* correspondent : "Left to themselves to deal with the various problems in the varying provinces, there is ample evidence that the Ministries, Congress and other, intend faithfully to serve the people. The Governors have permitted full freedom of action within the Constitution : even Congress Ministers have said so. But zonal dictators [so called by Congressmen] are too prone to exercise a disconcerting influence."

Exactly. And not the "zonal dictators" only. Unless I have flattered the Congress Ministers, their better intentions and efforts must seem to have been possible because they were not individually typical or representative of the party ; and that may have been why their continued progress was prejudiced and crippled. They depended on the support of an unruly following, very cock-a-hoop and more interested to consolidate its own power than "faithfully to serve the people." The Ministers were also held subservient to a party executive that tried to make the best of both worlds—adapting or subjecting the forms of parliamentary Home Rule in the provinces to an external authoritarianism overriding popular mandates. Even Rajendra Prasad, a mild and courteous member of the Congress hierarchy, was in a hurry to say that "Congress Ministers could do only what they were permitted to do by the Working Committee."

This committee is not an elective body : yet the fate of the Cripps and Wavell proposals for all Indians was deemed to depend largely on its decision. It is chosen by the elected President of the Congress in his sole dis-

cretion, despite a protest from Jawaharlal Nehru. None of its more formidable members has sought election to any of the legislatures. It should be the governing and disciplinary body of a single party, with functions similar to those of the Labour Party Executive. It aims at a closer resemblance to Italy's defunct Gran Consiglio del Fascismo. It seems to say "L'état, c'est moi." It arrogated to itself the power of a supreme, overriding oligarchy, so that to provincial Ministries it might be all and more than all they feared the Governors might be : with the difference that it took account less readily of "the various problems in the varying provinces." The Governors and Ministers are responsible to the people for day-by-day administration, and for the reconciliation of conflicting rights and interests. The Congress dictators have no such burden, so such responsibility.

"It is manifest that the Congress is more important than any Ministry," wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Unity of India* : and "it is to the Congress as a whole that the electorate gave allegiance" : and "the Ministers and the Congress parties in the legislatures are responsible to the Congress and *only through it* to the electorate" (my italics).

This authoritarianism soon began to irk. Some of the party's wiser newspapers, representing the views and interests of its several provinces, referred angrily to "the crack of the whip." It was argued that if certain men were judged fit to be Premiers and Ministers, they should be trusted to interpret their general instructions, not subjected to a meticulous and humiliating control. As one Indian Liberal paper put it :

"Mahatma Gandhi has stated that the parliamentary mentality has come to stay, but if Ministers constitutionally responsible to popularly elected legislatures are denied freedom to regulate their policy according to the will and wishes of their respective legislatures, and if the strings are to be pulled from outside, then it is not parliamentary or democratic government but party dictatorship or a form of Soviet government"

(In the spring of 1938 the Speaker of the Madras Parliament wished to visit England for a study of parliamentary procedure. The Madras Parliament gave its approval : the Congress Working Committee superimposed its veto.)

*Liquidation of a P.M.*

In August 1938, almost exactly a year after Congress took office, things came to a head in the Central Provinces. The Ministers had not worked together as a loyal team. In an effort to solve their difficulties, they reached a compromise agreement. Two or three of them broke that agreement, as the Congress executive admitted. The Premier, Dr. Khare, expected them to resign. They refused, so Dr. Khare resorted to ordinary constitutional expedients. He offered his resignation to the Governor, who asked him to form another Cabinet and dismissed the erring Ministers. Dr. Khare, still leader of the majority in the provincial legislature, did as he was asked ; and immediately the Congress Working Committee came down on him like a ton of bricks and drove him out of office.

His sin had been constitutional propriety. In the words of the Congress executive, "he tried and succeeded in securing the removal of inconvenient colleagues with the help of the Governor, *keeping the Congress authorities all the time in the dark.*" Gandhi wrote .

"He heightened the measure of his indiscipline by refusing the advice of the Working Committee to make a frank confession of his guilt. If Dr. Khare was impatient with his recalcitrant colleagues, he should have rushed, not to the Governor, but to the Working Committee. If he felt aggrieved at its decision, he could have gone to the All-India Congress Committee, but in no case should any Minister take an internal quarrel to the Governor and seek relief through him without the previous consent of the Working Committee."

The Governor, too, was attacked for having done his duty in a way that would make the Congress "uncomfortable."

This raised something of a storm that excited all India. A typical protest came from the Council of the Western India Liberal Federation. The Congress party in the Central Provinces legislature, it said, was the proper authority to deal with the situation :

"The central Congress executive may well lay down the general aims and policy to be followed, but the Ministries should be directly responsible to the legislatures and electorate, not to an outside committee controlled by a few individuals and, on almost all occasions, ultimately by one man. Such a development introduces the worst features of Fascist or Nazi dictatorship."

Sir K. V. Reddi, an eminent lawyer and politician of Madras, "compared the Congress Government to a totalitarian State, where the Congress Working Committee, which was responsible to nobody, held the reins of Government."

Gandhi's answer to this charge was remarkable. The Congress, he said, was the very antithesis of fascism because it was based on non-violence : in a fascist State Dr. Khare would have had to lose his head. (Does an -ism mean only the incidental methods by which it is established or maintained?) Dr. Khare retorted that that would have been better than signing the draft letter which the Working Committee told him to sign, at a meeting which was "more like a court-martial than anything else."\*

An Indian friend, always in close touch with his country's politics, told me he would make allowances for the Congress hierarchy on the ground that the provinces under its control were not really ripe—in competent personnel, at any rate—for representative self-government. But that by itself neither proved the superior competence of aloof party bosses, nor justified their fascist habits. My friend admitted ulterior motives for the Working Committee's action. In the background of the dispute was a bigger conflict of tongues. The fore-

\* Dr. Khare later held the portfolio of Commonwealth Relations in the Government of India

most dictators in the Congress do or can speak Hindi. In various dialects this is the most frequent of India's 200-odd languages, but nevertheless is used by a minority of the whole population. Newspapers in Central India made much of the difference of thought and temperament between Ministers from the Mahratta side of the Central Provinces and those from the Hindi-speaking side. Dr. Khare had the backing of the Mahrattas, the best elements in his province. Like the Tamils of Madras, many Bengalis, and users of Urdu elsewhere, they resented the efforts of the Congress to force a strange tongue and script upon them. If they must, for sake of convenience, learn an alien *lingua franca*, they were content with an English that had done them some good turns and served them well for intercourse with the outside world. (It remains essential to Congress sessions, and the language of the party's best newspapers.)

If India can become one nation, its self-respect may feel a need for an indigenous *lingua franca* for its multiplicity of peoples. Probably the choice should fall on Hindi; but there is Urdu and Bengali literature worth preserving alive, and the struggle for agreement will be sharp and dangerous. Leading Tamils in Madras, at any rate, considered that their self-respect required efforts to purge their language of Hindi and other interloping usages. Their passive resistance to compulsion, their pickets outside schools, were treated under Congress authority in a manner reminiscent of the very methods the party had damned as repressive during its civil disobedience campaigns. Over 900 were arrested.

#### *Flint and Tinder*

All this was but a small part of the whole story. Other episodes are relevant and consistent with it.

I have mentioned the Poona Pact that ended, on unexpected terms, Gandhi's "fast unto death" to alter the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislatures. Some critics suggested at the time that his motive then (and also in his arguments about the Wavell offer)

was to forestall a possible alliance between these unfortunates and the Moslems or other minorities. It then seemed more probable that he feared a political wedge might increase the estrangement of untouchable and caste Hindus, so he combined a gain to the Depressed Classes with a device for uniting them, at their secondary elections, with the people of caste. When the scheme had been working for a time, Congress tactics revived suspicions of it. Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Rajah, rival leaders of the Depressed Classes, forgot their personal quarrel in angry agreement that caste Congressmen had exploited to their own advantage the votes of Untouchables in the secondary (joint) elections. This experience in provinces under local Congress rule was not soon forgotten. In its resolution of May 7th, 1945, on the future Central Government of India, the All-India Scheduled Castes [Untouchables] Federation "re-iterated its demands for the irreducible minimum of protection against the tyranny and oppression that would be sure to follow the rule of the Hindu communal majority."

The Parsis, though relatively very few, are the outstanding community in Bombay city. One of their well-known journalists, Mr. Naoroji Dumasia, sent *The Times* this complaint against the Congress provincial Government :

"When H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught inaugurated the Bombay Legislative Council, which had been reformed under the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme, I quoted the words of Queen Victoria about no more hatred to the brown races ; and I sounded the warning that we did not want a brown oligarchy to succeed a white oligarchy. To my sorrow we have now got what I then dreaded might come

"Your Bombay Correspondent recently cabled that the Government had put a ban on five newspapers. Of those, four are Moslem and one—the *Jam-e-Jamshed*—is a Parsi paper, which has a history of about 110 years. The *Jam-e-Jamshed* has been a great power for good in Bombay, a consistent advocate of social and administrative reform, a loyal supporter of Britain, and during the War a fervent upholder of the Allied cause. Much beloved as it is by the

Parsis, the *Jam-e-Jamshed* has never been fanatical. Now a Minister who has shown himself to be every inch a communalist has dealt that paper a cruel blow."

In the United Provinces—where murder increased by 34 per cent., armed robbery by 70 per cent., burglary by 21 per cent., and riots were nearly doubled, in the first two years of Congress rule—criminals prematurely released from gaol were enlisted to break up meetings organized by Opposition elements.

Riots have been started sometimes by Congress elements, as at Cawnpore, and sometimes by minorities, with or without cause ; and too often there has been a sympathetic difference of tempo in the corrective action initiated by Congress Ministers. In one case a Congress Minister of Justice (*sic*) publicly blamed Mohammedans where his own magistracy, in open court, had held that "it was the Hindus who set the ball rolling."

High Courts of Justice had occasion to rebuke or punish several Congressmen for trying, in virtue of their association with the governing party, to suborn the judiciary or arrogate its functions to themselves.

The Hindu Mahasabha, like the Moslem League, is unashamedly a communal organization its creed and policy are avowedly anti-Moslem before they are continentally pro-Indian. Hence its fury at the Wavell proposal for equal representation of Moslems and caste Hindus in the interim Government of India. The Mahasabha has sometimes levelled against Congress the curious charge that the party's active Anglophobia has biassed the British Government in favour of the Moslems—or even that the Congress itself is too kind to the Moslems. But the Congress, while rejecting all members of the Moslem League, receives members of the Mahasabha into its fold and has ostentatiously honoured its leading personalities.

Here are a few other examples of Congress governance :

(1) The Chairman of a Local Self-Government Board in the Central Provinces circulated instructions to all schools in his district for the observance of the birthday of "that

great personality Mahatma Gandhi, who has given the message of truth and non-violence to the world." All members of the School Managing Committee, and "all other gentry of the village," were to be invited to celebrations at the school. "The picture of Mahatma Gandhi should be worshipped," and immediate report was to be made to the Chairman. There are people who think less obsequiously of Gandhi, and the Chairman must have known perfectly well that the Moslems would be sinning against their religion by worship or reverence of any man's portrait, even if they had been his political followers. Yet the letter was sent specifically to Urdu schools, where most or all of the pupils were Moslems. On another occasion the Moslem boys at a mixed school were ordered to pay homage to a Hindu idol.

(2) In the same province, before the Congress took office, the Moslem minority had at least one representative on each Debt Conciliation Board—a matter of rather particular importance to them. Since that time there have been several such Boards without Moslem representation of any kind.

(3) At a by-election meeting in the United Provinces the Congress candidate's supporters on the platform included a man recently convicted in the Courts for promoting communal hatred !

(4) At a town in the Surat district of Bombay some waste land belonging to the Government adjoined an *Id-gah*—the place of worship where Moslems gather for their great prayer meetings on days of festival. For years they had been wont to use this land as a park for their pony-carts, etc., when they assembled for their prayers, and for their crops at other times. During the old regime the Hindus of the neighbourhood applied unsuccessfully to the Deputy Collector of the district—a Hindu—for leave so to fence the land that it would no longer serve the Moslems' purpose. The official's decision was upheld by higher authority, but reversed by the Congress Ministry on its assuming office.

(5) The highest courts of the land—including the Privy Council, I believe—had held that the Moslem right to kill cows for beef did not rest on custom alone. Hindus in a district of Bihar sought to challenge this right, and a Congress Minister announced in the legislature that the Govern-

ment would consider the point when and if the Moslems concerned had gone to the civil court and proved it to have been their custom. In this and other Congress provinces unprecedented efforts were made, either by Government authority or with its sanction, to prevent ordinary or sacrificial slaughter of cattle by Moslems, occasionally with economic reason, much more often because the cow is sacred to Congress Hindus.

(6) The Congress Government in Bombay instructed its District officials to consult the chairman of local Congress committees, but not the Moslem League, about nominations to local authorities and the allocation of seats on them.

These affairs may seem trivial, and each by itself almost certainly was. But they were straws in a wind that blew and blows with cumulative effect. If in 1938—even if immediately before or after Munich—the Tory chairman of a county council had given instructions for all schools in the county to honour Neville Chamberlain's birthday with religious homage to his portrait, this might have been thought a trifling matter *perhaps*: but you may doubt it. If a former Director of Army Catering, on the pretext of his Jewish faith, had refused to let the British Army eat ham, bacon, pork or sausages, you may think there would have been a rumpus. If we had nominations to local authorities, and a Tory Minister of Health were to order consultation with local Conservatives, National Labour or Liberal Nationals, but not with representatives of the Labour Party or Opposition Liberals, you would expect a small shindy, I think. And remember that in the provinces where those incidents happened the offended can never hope for redress by turning the electoral tables against the community best represented by the Congress.

Mr. M. A. Jinnah, now President of the Moslem League and always a doughty champion of provincial autonomy, for long stood nearer to the Congress than to any other party. In December 1938 he declared himself "completely disillusioned" by events of the previous eighteen months. It seems a pity that Mohammedans and Hindus cannot always agree as thoroughly as he concurred with

Hindu Liberals in his opinion that "the Congress provincial Governments are not functioning on the lines of a democratic parliamentary system of Government, but on the lines of fascism and authoritarian governments, with the British Army and police behind them." He added : " So far as Moslems are concerned, they have in many parts of those provinces been cruelly treated and attempts have been made to crush them " A political or rhetorical exaggeration of truth, perhaps—like the wilder nonsense flying-around on both sides in our own electioneering campaign. Moslems published detailed catalogues of specific charges against Congress discrimination and worse. Some of these charges, denied by the Congress, look preposterous, and Professor Coupland (see postscript to this chapter) evidently thought they were. But he notices " a well-written and clearly argued statement, the more effective because of its restraint," in the *Report of the Inquiry Committee appointed by the Council of the All-India Muslim League to inquire into Grievances in Congress Provinces*. Coupland sees much to admire in the Congress party's educational policy, but recognizes the earnest, yet temperate force of Sir Azizul Huque's indictment of it in the *Kamal Yar Jung Education Committee Report*. As in England we have made the provision of religious teaching obligatory, we can hardly afford to quarrel with the Moslem view that no single party has a right to veto religious teaching.

So Moslems throughout India observed a special Day of Thanksgiving for release from Congress *raj* when the party's Ministries resigned—thus temporarily ending provincial autonomy—and critics of the demonstrations were forced to admit their impressiveness and sincerity.

### *Looking Ahead*

Nor are *ex parte* allegations an essential supplement to facts and statements by Congressmen that support a general proposition.

Consider a few of the lesser omens, and you may think they resembled the premonitory symptoms that warned

us, years before the war, of what was happening to the domestic politics of Germany. . . . The Congress devised a party banner—a tricolour, not a swastika—but called it the National Flag. Citizens were sometimes bullied for not saluting it. A Congress newspaper in Calcutta endorsed similar antics in Germany, and suggested that in India under Congress rule everyone would or should be required to salute the flag. By order of Congress Ministries it was flown on impartial public buildings. . . . Party rules, prejudices or doctrines had been treated as though they were the law of the land. . . . Party dictators competed with constitutional authority. . . . Party Volunteers usurped the functions of the police, or picketed shops, colleges, etc., to coerce the minds of other people and communal minorities, regardless of such disasters as the habit provoked in Cawnpore.

It is true that these manifestations were often childish, and most conspicuous in Congress campaigns against foreign rule ; but they continued later with other pretexts. And now and again the whole cat comes out of the bag at the instance of the men best qualified to reveal it. I have quoted Rajendra Prasad's remark that "Congress Ministers could do only what they were permitted to do by the Working Committee." Gandhi went further. In an article in his own paper *Harijan*, belabouring the unfortunate Dr. Khare, he declared that "The Governors must recognise the Congress as the one national organisation which is bound some day or other to replace the British Government." In the Bengal Legislature the provincial Congress party is a relatively small minority, yet at its own party conference in February 1939 it demanded that a treaty embodying a new constitution for all India should be negotiated between the British Government and the Congress *alone* ; and you will remember the party's contribution to Bengal terrorism. During the summer of 1939 Gandhi recovered, for a time, the candour that so embarrasses his followers. "The Congress," he said, "has become unwieldy ; it has corruption in it ; there is indiscipline among Congress-

men, and rival groups have come into being which would radically change the Congress programme if they could secure a majority. . . . There is ever-growing communal tension. . . . We have not done anything like justice to the task undertaken by the Congress in connection with ministerial actions. Interference, sometimes irritating, has come from Congressmen and Congress organizations." Yet a few weeks later he warned Indian Princes not to organize against the Congress because, whatever changes the party might undergo, it would remain "the only institution that will succeed British Imperialism." You may remember that two or three years ago the party's agents in London were displaying posters boldly headed . "Hand over all power to Congress."

The only institution? To succeed "British imperialism?" So that all other parties and provinces, the communal minorities and Princes, if surviving at all with identities of their own, would be subservient to the Congress as they had been to British rule—no matter what the result of elections? Hitler obviously meant his National Socialist party to be "the only institution" that would succeed the Weimar Constitution. But Germany (unfortunately) was a political unit, or anyhow a nation, in a sense and degree that India hardly can be, and Hitler's very different ambitions extended far beyond. For various reasons, some of them already obvious and others appearing very soon, most of what I have said concerns only a major part of India—Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces, Madras, Orissa, United Provinces, Assam probably, and Bengal in certain respects. (The excursion into Kashmir was to tell a story suggesting general as well as particular inferences.) That is not all the ground the Congress covets. The next chapters will look into the rest—a territory where talk of "the only institution" simply won't do.

POSTSCRIPT For further and later information on the theme of this chapter, see Prof. R. Coupland's *Indian Politics 1936-1942* (Oxford University Press), the best of all available books on its subject. In his chapter X,

section (iii), and chapter XI, section (v), his findings on the totalitarian aggressiveness of the Congress party gain force from his objective approach. His chapter XVII on "The Moslem Reaction" also illuminates and reinforces what I have tried to say above and in pages to come. Nor have I read any better account than his of the Cripps mission, to which he was attached.

*Verdict on India* (Cape), by Beverley Nichols, is wholly different in matter and manner. But chapter I of Part III has political comment that repays cautious study. Nichols quotes an Indian book called *The Iron Dictator*, "frequently recommended by Congress enthusiasts" but not available in London. Its eponymous hero is Vallabhai Patel, whom it describes as Gandhi's greatest General. Nichols quotes the book as saying with evident approval : "Patel's system was not based on democracy—it was a reaction against democracy . . . Either one agrees with him and is incorporated in his machine or one disagrees with him and is sent to the wall." In such a manner he dealt with Mr. Nariman, a Minister in the Congress Government of Bombay who seems to have offended the party Executive as Dr. Khare did elsewhere. Patel's apologist is quoted as writing : "Nariman not only disagreed with Patel but like the storm-troopers Ernst and Roehm he had personal differences with the Dictator. The storm troopers were shot by Hitler. Nariman was not shot, but merely eliminated." He also compares Patel with Subhas Bose, President of the Congress in 1938 and energetic in the service of Germany and Japan during the war. "The difference between Patel and Bose is the same as the difference between Hitler and Hess," according to Beverley Nichols' quotations from the book.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEMOCRATS AT HOME

As you travel out of the United Provinces into and through the Punjab—before the war you would notice, first, a wonderful improvement in the roads—you enter what has always seemed to me a different land, with a difference increasing all the way until it hits you in the face most startlingly, though not unpleasantly, when you have crossed the Indus into the land of Pathans. The real Punjab differs physically, politically, socially, temperamentally and intellectually from the country you have left behind you. As an intellectual competitor its chances would be poor, and if it dreams of personal wealth on the scale to be found in Bengal and Bombay it has yearned in vain hitherto. Its advantages and blessings—admittedly relative terms—are more than enough to console it. Among them I would place its healthier marriage customs. The 1931 census of All India showed that 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of all girls under ten, and 18 per cent. of all under fifteen, were married. The corresponding percentages in the Punjab only were 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  respectively; take the Punjabi Mohammedans and Sikhs by themselves and you get still better figures. Though the province has a much smaller population than Madras, Bengal or the U.P., we have to thank it for over half the combatant strength of the Indian Army in peace-time, and for a third of its vastly multiplied strength in war-time.\*

But these facts are minor though significant aids to an

\* It is sometimes urged that other provinces would contribute equally if authority gave them a chance. Possibly, or perhaps not. Though the entrance examination for the Indian Military Academy is open to all comers, the Punjab usually supplied a clear majority of the successful pre-war candidates.

understanding of those contrasts in politics that must be my main theme. A more important and related aid is the fortunate and exceptional closeness of Punjab politics to the land, the soil ; and for that reason I must beg forgiveness if what follows seems to become discursive, sometimes. The risk is worth while, for the Punjab must provide the corner-stone or backbone, so to speak, of separated Pakistan's political life : and only in the Punjab have we had recently an organized, non-communal Indian party *working* on tolerably satisfactory terms.

#### *Land and People*

The Punjab's least enviable distinction is an elaboration of its communal problem into a "triangular drama."

There is the small but proud, enterprising and martial minority of three-and-three-quarter million Sikhs. There is the Moslem majority, rather more than 16,000,000 strong, also of martial stock. Among the seven-and-a-half million Hindus are breeds of fine fighting men. Political careerists of all three communities are wont to get at them, playing up communal prejudices and jealousies. These are always dangerous and explode murderously now and then. The province also has a bad record of ordinary, non-communal murder—especially, one regrets to see, among the Sikhs of Ferozepore District.

Yet in the past fifteen years or more the Punjab has never suffered massacres equal in frequency and casualties to the communal riots of Bengal, the United Provinces and Bombay. That is evidence of wise government, of course, and of lessons learned by Authority and people in the eruptions following the last war. Undoubtedly another reason, attested by the work of citizen conciliation committees in more than one local crisis, is a strong leaven of common sense generally permeating the province ; of self-respect that will not lightly yield to hysteria ; of suspicion that it is silly to cut off your nose to spite your face ; and a community of interest in Mother Earth.

It is claimed for the Punjab that the organization and yield of its agricultural services are the best, on the whole,

of any in India : the gross value of its produce is put at nearly a fifth of the British-Indian total. In a glance at some statistics the other day I noticed that the Punjab, though fifth of all the eleven provinces in population, stood first in the production of wheat, gram and cotton, second in sugar and indigo, third in barley and maize, fourth in *baia* (spiked millet), tea, rape and mustard. Its Co-operative Societies have the biggest funds of all, and more members than any others in India except those of Madras, whose population is 75 per cent. bigger.

In Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces a zemindar in popular parlance often means a wealthy, idle, absentee and extortionate lord of extremely broad acres, only too well protected by a paternal Government. Of the three-and-a-half-million zemindars in the Punjab before the war a big majority were "small" peasant proprietors tilling their soil with their own hands : another reason for the failure of civil disobedience there. They are the backbone of the great agricultural community, setting the pace and standard of work (high or low) for other millions of tenants or landless labourers. Many let their entire holdings while they rent and cultivate other parcels of ground on their own account, or sometimes hire themselves out to work. In short, renter, rent-payer and even labourer may be represented in one and the same person ; or, if they are not, they have an exceptionally good understanding (*a*) with each other and (*b*) of the larger estate-owners. Hence, for instance, a decision by the big landlords that the Punjab, unlike four other provinces, would need no Second Chamber in the new legislature : their interests were not so remote from the generality of voters that they felt the need for special protection.

The picture has a less pleasant side, of course ; or if you look at the same side from another angle the colour scheme deteriorates noticeably. As in Lewis Carroll's "Alice," there is a monstrous crow. It often frightens the heroes into forgetting their quarrel, but not always and not thoroughly enough. A peasant zemindar has a bad season, say because the rains that year are

subnormal. A moneylender dangles his bait, the peasant walks into his parlour, and the situation becomes as complicated as my mixture of metaphors. In a desperate effort to pay the bania's interest, the zemindar lets or otherwise disposes of part of his land for sake of ready cash. The next monsoon may be good, or perhaps irrigation reaches him, but his smallholding is now so very small that he cannot make it pay his way, nor his produce plus his rent-receipts cover his increasing liabilities. The fragmentation of land has created difficulties in many parts of India. The Punjab farmer, sturdy but simple, is no match in wits for the bania, the money-grubbing urbanite, and their friends the lawyers. The total agricultural debt of the province was computed a few years ago at sums ranging from £75,000,000 to twice as much—enormous figures for India.

These ills are a hang-over from days that were worse. Nearly all the genuine peasants of the province might have been reduced to economic ruin or slavery if the Punjab had not a way of stimulating, now and then, the best sympathies and qualities of its British administrators and the men who were preparing to take over from them. At the end of the last century an I.C.S. official named Thorburn was closing in disappointment a career devoted to emancipation of the peasant. It looked as though the banias, the lawyers and the British view of property rights had beaten him. They conspired to represent the zemindars' land as a useful and convenient security for their debts, and it was rapidly falling to the money-lenders. The turning point came with the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1901. All clans owning land on a substantial scale, and dependent on it for subsistence, were registered with the Government. Save for specified purposes, and by leave of his District Commissioner, no zemindar within those categories could now transfer his holding to anyone off the register. If an "outsider" wanted to take up farming, he could buy land from the Government at public auctions. The Act was imperfect, and did less than was hoped of it, but it prevented catastrophe, and

gave the peasant a foil to the bania's last grab. The growth of Co-operation helped him more positively.

There are similar statutes elsewhere in India, but the Punjab Act became famous for the sustained venom of opposition to it by the people whose mischief it checked, by political careerists eager to exploit their chagrin. They fought it all the way, even enlisting a few genuine nationalists who should have known better but thought any slick good enough to beat an alien Government. Once or twice they contrived to agitate peasants against it, on the ground that it depreciated the market value of land and credit for the financing of cultivation. The struggle continues.

#### *Party and Policy*

To meet this campaign, and for the general betterment of the millions directly or indirectly threatened by it, the Punjab Unionist (*alias* Country) Party stood behind, beside, before or against the provincial Government from 1923 onwards. It was founded by the late Fazl-i-Hussain, and since 1937, under Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and his successor as Prime Ministers, it has guided constructive politics in the province. It deserves its name, since it is the only considerable party in India with Moslem, Hindu, Indian Christian, Eurasian and European (British) members, and it has Sikh associates.

Twenty-four years ago India began to acquire a diluted parliamentarianism. With the possible exception of some able leaders in Madras—the only province rivalling the Punjab in that line of business—Fazl-i-Hussain was the first non-official Indian to see how the occasion could be improved by and for his own people. He saw that if they were to get full value for the reforms then introduced, they must learn how to work a party system in the legislature; and the better the party in those days, the better would be the chances and results of its assuming office when provincial Home Rule became full-fledged. Following Gandhi into the wilderness of civil disobedience would be no way to forward the interests

of the Punjab in general or the Moslems in particular. Fazli did much to make his own community see that : and in doing so he persuaded other Punjabis also. This and the innate good sense of its common people spared the province the worst nuisances of disobedience campaigns in the nineteen-thirties.

The Unionist leaders undertook a notoriously difficult job when they set out to stimulate and organize a political awareness in the rural communities, and to lead them along the ways of constitutional progress. They had a substantial majority in the provincial legislature, but it was being proved elsewhere that mere numbers without cohesion could not suffice against the power of money, against the self-interested astuteness of the urban intelligentsia holding that power. An obvious counter was a party and policy welding the peasant majority together. That was Fazli's legacy to his province and successor.

It was not, of course, a mechanism as elaborate or as efficient as any of your parties in England. Perhaps it would be fair to say that the Punjab Unionists could not and did not reach maturity until their big chance came with the reforms of 1937, and that maturity here is a relative term. But they did good work at a time when constructive politics were still rare or spasmodic in non-official India, and they continue to do it.

We can look more closely, by-and-by, at the tints and causes of the party's communal colouring. The platitude I am concerned with at the moment is that the soil is no respecter of communities. It is owned and worked by Moslems, Sikhs and Hindus. All peasants alike stood to gain by the efforts of the Unionists, save here or there where an individual zemindar subordinated his farming to a little business in usury on his own account. Even by its constant criticism of "the under-representation of various classes and groups in the Public Services" the party sometimes meant and proved that the peasantry, irrespective of community, were at a disadvantage as against other interests equally non-communal. Look at Appendix II for some of the measures originated by the

Unionists or carried by their votes, and you may wonder why Congressmen damn them so fiercely if the Congress is sincere in its professions. The work may seem small beer to us in England, pampered and plundered as we are even in peace-time by central and local authority ; but the normal income of the Punjab's exchequer, for all purposes, was twenty per cent. less than the amount spent here on the Metropolitan Police and Police Courts in Greater London. The weather, too, played such pranks with the peasant that the new Government remitted considerable fractions of its land revenue. Yet in his second year of office the Finance Minister was able to budget for a surplus with the announcement of a record expenditure on nation-building services—an expenditure per capita only exceeded in Bombay, whose sum of resources is substantially larger. He increased expenditure on social services by 24 per cent. in his first three years.\*

The Finance Minister was not a member of the Unionist party. He was Lala Manohar Lal, a Hindu who had stood against it at the last elections. And that brings me to something else. . . .

#### *Good Companions*

Sikandar Hyat Khan continued a remarkable family tradition (for which see Appendix III). When he succeeded to leadership of the Unionists, on the death of Fazl-i-Hussain, he had twice been Acting Governor of his province—once in a time of communal tension when the bravest and most capable Moslem, Sikh or Hindu might have shrunk from so invidious a job. In nearly every other province Indian Ministers and Executive Councillors of the old Constitution disappeared with it *en bloc* in 1937, either because they were damned for having trained and equipped themselves in co-operation with British administrators, or because they had no organized parties behind them : and certainly not all of them were

\* Coupland notes that by 1939-40 the increase of outlay on social services in the "non-Congress" provinces was five per cent. greater than it was in the Congress provinces.

remarkable for their capacity. I like to think it was typical of the Punjab to choose a man for his knowledge of his job, rather than a politician merely professing to know it at the top of his voice. And it gave Sikandar, ready made, almost the only considerable political party in India that has genuinely tried, in the last few years, to cut across communal divisions *and* bring to its new duties the fruits of legislative and administrative experience.

Italics for the “*and*” because some people will dispute what goes immediately before it, and perhaps I ought not to quarrel with them on that score. But Sikandar had been made Acting Governor because the Hindus and Sikhs trusted him : they welcomed his appointment : I could quote speeches and actions whereby he justified their trust : and it is possible, after all, for a party to grow communal by reason of other communities shunning it. Perhaps that is an excuse for the Congress’s communalism ; but the Unionists of the Punjab, as you shall see, have made no attempt to imitate its fascism.

Under the old Constitution they contributed their share of Ministers to the non-official wing of the Governor’s Executive Council. Two of these were Fazli-Hussain and Firoz Khan Noon, lately High Commissioner for India in London and British India’s representative at the War Cabinet. But a third was Chaudhri Chhotu Ram, a fearless, independent, persistent Hindu from the very Hindu district of Rohtak ; and when he was out of office, after Fazli’s appointment to the Government of India, he led the Unionist party in the legislature. Sir Jogendra Singh, an amiable and scholarly Sikh, was Minister for Agriculture. He neither belonged to the Unionist party nor liked it, and sometimes he had to oppose it in the House, but at other times he and they were glad of one another’s support.

This political fellowship, representing an indivisible community of interest in the soil and resistance to a common foe, was reflected fairly often in the debates and voting of the legislature. But there could be no blinking the fact that a majority of the Punjabis and therefore of

the Unionists were Moslems ; and the common enemy happened to be a class of Hindu capable of reinforcing the ties of caste and religion with the power of capital, ready money, generally of intellectual advantage and industry, and of political supremacy over the greater part of India. By and large, they could aggravate the traditional prejudice of Hindu and Sikh against the Moslem, and few of the more vocal Mohammedans were slow to reciprocate. (You can put it the other way round if you like.) I have said all rural communities had a joint concern in the Unionists' campaign against over-representation of urban interests in the Public Services ; but "fair" representation could not always mean the same thing to all of them, and the (Moslem) majority in the party would press Mohammedan claims a little too hard.

On the eve of provincial autonomy an unfortunate event in Lahore made matters precarious. Sikhs in a locality called Shahidganj owned some property including a mosque. They said the mosque was dilapidated and disused, and for all I know they may have been right. Nevertheless it was a mosque, a consecrated place, and their decision to demolish it enabled religious firebrands to excite Moslem anger. The Courts were appealed to, but the law of property prevailed. A clause in the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure offers protection to religious buildings if their destruction is likely to cause a breach of the peace, but the Government declined to intervene. (Perhaps its refusal was right, though Lord Linlithgow surrendered easily enough, at considerable cost to the taxpayer, when Hindus protested on religious grounds against the building of an Army abattoir in Lahore.) So the mosque came down and communal hostilities flared up.

Agitation over this affair simmered on for months. It seemed certain to poison the atmosphere of the Punjab elections, and was made a plank in the platform of certain political cliques. Had Mohammedans in the Unionist party been so minded, they could have exploited it to their own peculiar advantage. For sake of a better and

more honourable peace, they let bygones be bygones. When a Moslem sought to legislate for restoration of the mosque, Sir Sikandar opposed the Bill.

"The Mussulmans of the Punjab," he said, "owe a special responsibility not only to the minorities in the Punjab but also to their co-religionists who constitute minorities in other provinces. No far-sighted or patriotic Mussulman can in these circumstances permit his community in the Punjab to take any unreasonable step against the minorities which, if similarly applied by non-Moslem majorities against the minorities in other provinces, would jeopardise the fundamental rights and position of the Moslems there."

I have shown how Congress Governments elsewhere rewarded this attitude, and will say more about that presently. What I wish to show now is the manner and form the Unionist party assumed after a period of acute tension that threatened to drive it back to a more rather than less communal standpoint.

In the elections to the new legislature the Unionists returned a hundred or 101 of the 175 members. They captured ten of the fifty Hindu constituencies while the Congress took two of the Moslems' 84 "open" seats. The Unionists had no luck in any of the 31 Sikh constituencies, but of these the Congress won only four. The European, Anglo-Indian (Eurasian) and two Indian Christian seats all went to Unionists.

When the legislature met after the elections there was a certain amount of party realignment. The extreme Akali faction of Sikhs and a few of the seats held by the Hindu National Progressive Party reverted to the Congress, which with 35 members became the second party in the House. On the other side, accretions to the Unionists and support by the Sikh Khalsa National Party gave the new Government an average voting strength of about 120, including two-fifths of the total Hindu representation.

This development was made possible by Sikandar's choice of Ministers for his Cabinet and his party's assent

to the choice. He would have been the first to acknowledge the help and guidance he received from Sir Herbert Emerson, the Governor : the fact remains that none of the Congress Premiers did the job so well. The Constitution bound him to give the minorities representation in the Cabinet. He could have done that by the normal method of picking only men in his own party—Chaudhri Chhotu Ram, for instance, became Minister for Development—or inveigling an Independent or two. He preferred men whose qualifications to speak for their communities could not reasonably be disputed even by his party's organized opponents. Lala Manohar Lal, his Finance Minister, was returned for the University constituency by the Hindu National Progressive Party. The Ministry of Revenue went to the late Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, the Grand Old Man of the Sikhs, secretary for eighteen years to their Chief Khalsa Diwan, a member of the Imperial Council of 1909, and leader of the Khalsa National Party. The other two Ministries, Education and Public Works, went to Unionists : Mian Abdul Haye and Nawabzada Khizr Hyat Khan Tiwana, of whom the second succeeded Sikandar as Premier. The catholicity of the Finance Ministry, incidentally, was completed by the appointment of Begum Shah Nawaz as Parliamentary Secretary—she was a delegate to the Indian Round Table Conference in London—and Sir William Roberts as Parliamentary Private Secretary. The Begum Sahiba was thus India's first woman Minister.

There have been difficulties since Sikandar died, but no breakdown yet. There has been misguided meddling of the wrong kind by the "high command" of the Moslem League—its equipoise to the Congress "high command"—but the Ministry has resisted it pretty stoutly. The new Government and legislature in the Punjab implied a communal accord not to be found elsewhere. The Congress set its face against coalitions with members of other parties unless they would coalesce with it like the lady of Riga putting a smile on the face of the tiger. Much too often, therefore, the men inveigled into Congress

Ministries from the minorities were men of straw, and they could not speak for their communities even if or when they were satisfactory as individuals. That is one way of exacerbating communal suspicions—rather as the Nazis stimulated British antipathy to our own fascists by petting and patting their leader. On the other hand, nobody in his senses could call Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, for instance, a creature of the Punjab Mohammedans or Unionist party : his antipathy to them nearly wrecked the Indian Round Table Conference : yet he was invited to join them as a Parliamentary Secretary to the Punjab Government.

A few months before he died (at Christmas, 1942) Sikandar Hyat-Khan did even better. He won the co-operation of the Akali Sikhs, for 20 years the most "difficult" of all sectarians, and gave them a portfolio in his Ministry.

#### *Bad Stable-mates*

That sort of accord does not at all suit the Congress book—for reasons easily inferable from what I have said or quoted in this or previous chapters.

The business of an Opposition is to oppose, but not all the time and every time, nor only for sake of opposing. Some Congressmen in the Punjab Legislative Assembly have played the game, no doubt ; but under orders of their High Command outside the Punjab their group has organized attacks in and out of the House against legislation exactly similar to Acts of the Congress Ministries in other provinces. It can rarely be the constitutional function of any party, at deliberate risk of shattering a country's peace and equilibrium, to undermine Authority as such when it reflects the laws of a constitutionally elected parliament. Yet that is what Congressmen have set out to do, in season and out of season, wherever they have seen a chance in the Press and countryside of the Punjab and Bengal. *The Times* correspondent—not at all easily angered—wrote :

"Congress village committees are being created in the

Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, and in other areas where the Congress writ does not naturally belong ; and minor Congress agents, who are potential dangers to ordered government, are undertaking to remedy grievances they have neither authority nor ability to touch. . . .

"The non-Congress Ministries in the north are the constant prey of propagandists, and the Moslems are suffering unjustly at the hands of the Hindu Press. This Press campaign is hindering the policy of communal unity which many Ministers, Congress and Moslem alike, are encouraging ; certain sections of the Press publish injudicious material that is not calculated to foster better relations between the communities. Non-Congress Ministries suffer from lack of Press support, particularly in the Punjab and Bengal. All the principal organs of public opinion are in Hindu hands, and the Moslems are handicapped nearly everywhere by an artificial opposition which is imbued with danger for future Hindu-Moslem relations. The sober tone of newspapers like the *Hindu* of Madras and the *Leader* of Allahabad is an important exception."

In one murderous crisis Sikandar called a meeting to examine its causes, but the Congress refused the invitation.

It may be argued that some Moslems were equally guilty in other provinces—or would have been if they had had equal facilities—because the Governments and legislatures there were dominated by Congressmen. If that is true, as in part it may be, it is bad but does not make a wrong right. I have never heard anyone seriously accuse the Moslems of working for Mussulman *raj* over all India, and the Moslem League is in no sense an authoritarian machine for the imposition of its will on all peoples in India. Though it is only fair to acknowledge that many Congressmen have confessed the failure of the pretence, the party still keeps up a façade of non-communalism in theory. If, then, they were really interested in genuine nationalism for an Indian Commonwealth, and in proving its capacity for complete Home Rule, the example of the Punjab Government and parliament should have served their purpose best ; for there, with three rival communities instead of two, they saw the

nearest approach to a free union and concord of the communities on a healthy scale. But the avowed goal of Congressmen, as I have shown from their own statements, is Congress *raj* : it means Congress Hindu *raj* : and its authoritarian *motif* is conspicuous. . . .

Straws in the wind from Kashmir, sundry parts of Hindustan, the seat of future federal authority, and the Congress camp itself. And pin-pricks all the time, their points not less sharp or tainted because the Moslem minorities that get the worst of them do a little too much pricking on their own account, at times. I have seen them even rouse the late Sir Mohammed Iqbal, poet and philosopher of the Punjab, from his couch, books and hookah—and bewilder and anger those stout-hearted old comrades-in-arms, Sher Mohammed Khan and Chaudhri Lal Chand, a Hindu. There was a day or two, before the latest reforms of 1935, when I was filled with hope as a witness of talks between leading Sikhs and Moslems of the Punjab. Men like Firoz Khan Noon were there, and the sturdily phlegmatic Nawab Muzaffar Khan, and Sunder Singh Majithia, and Bhuta Singh (the younger, I think) : another Sikh or two were in the background, with Haji Rahim Bakhsh, a Moslem first and foremost but in some respects one of the "whitest" Christians in my acquaintance, and the late Muhammad Hayat Khan Noon—father of Firoz—who was as fine a man of his type as you could want. They were negotiating for an agreed amendment of the Communal Award. They did not find one, but I am pretty sure their talks prevented a flare-up of the current controversy, and if I remember aright they even went some way towards mollifying Master Tara Singh and blind Gyani Sher Singh, implacable enemies of each other, of the Moslems and of the British. It was good to hear and see how Sunder Singh's deep voice and venerable mien kept discussion on a sober plane.

I could not help thinking there was far more in common between them all, and between their roots in the soil and

affairs of the Punjab, than either side had with the complexes of politics elsewhere in India. One of them—I forget who it was—all but said so in as many words, and it is by no means impossible they might have reached the agreement they wanted if they could have insulated their province against these complexes.

But there is no denying the inflammability of the stuff the differences are made of, and insulation may become more difficult than ever with the establishment of majority rule in a supreme Federal Parliament at Delhi. Congressmen hope they will then be able to extend an authoritarian power of a kind the Punjab has successfully resisted hitherto. In any case it will be the rule of a great Hindu majority, often in conflict with the minorities. The time may come when the Punjab, to save itself from this disintegrating infection, may be well advised to look around, in directions away from Delhi, for a separate Federation of its own. Some of its Mohammedans have entertained the thought already. Don't you think the authors of the Cripps proposals were justified in suggesting some sympathy with the idea?

## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE FRONTIER

#### *Red Shirt*

ABDUL GHAFAR KHAN, misnicknamed "The Frontier Gandhi," seemed to have the same idea fifteen years ago. It may be that the key to it rests in his hands, or with his successors in political leadership of the Pathans.

He had come up to Simla with the Congress Working Committee, and joined a party of Punjabi Mohammedans and others at lunch. Conversation developed unexpectedly. The Punjab Moslems told A.G.K. what they thought of the Congress, its behaviour at Cawnpore, its

attitude to Kashmir, and so on. Why, he replied, should the Moslems of the Frontier and Punjab fear the Congress if they were united?

They were united, administratively, until the beginning of this century. The Government at Lahore had the care of all land and peoples up to the Indo-Afghan border. That must have been a heavy burden on provincial finance and administration, and possibly the Punjab would have found the rapidity of its later progress impossible if the Frontier Province had not been committed to other hands. But the separation politically isolated the Pathans on their side of the Indus. They were treated rather like backward children, needing special supervision, but unfit for the benevolence of special efforts to bring them forward. They were given a form of government that kept them out in the cold while their neighbours and the rest of India advanced *via* the Morley-Minto regime, with its representative institutions, to the diluted autonomy of Montagu and Chelmsford.

So Abdul Ghaffar Khan told us that in its beginning his movement was for social reform only. Had officialdom treated it in the right way he would never have been driven into the arms of the Congress. As much is generally admitted, now, by all officials with eyes to see. But others were less perceptive at the right moment. They had been aloof, indifferent, even hostile to the movement. In disgust, said A. G. K., he looked about him for allies, and only the Congress seemed to have the power to help him. They would serve his purpose *for the time being*. If not, he would drop them.

Then came an argument that may have been less paradoxical than it seemed at the moment. We asked, naively enough, why A.G.K. had turned his movement for social reform into a political campaign. He had two answers. The Frontier Province wanted equality of constitutional status with the rest of India. That has been granted. Also he had seen "revolution" coming to India, and did not like the look of it. His people wanted independence for their Pathanistan. They would

not mind federating with India, provided there was no tampering with their individuality, no interference by the Indian "revolution" with their great traditions. They were with the Congress for the present, but if that or any other party fell foul of their claims, they would break away from it forthwith.

So much for a Red Shirt view of the Congress. I have an idea, though it may be wrong, that A.G.K. also saw how most Congressmen hoped to use the Red Shirts. Nobody supposes that Berlin's sympathy with the Sudeten Germans, or Italian encouragement of the Palestinian Arabs, or Italo-German intervention in Spain, was strictly altruistic. Nazi interest in Codreanu's Iron Guard and our own Mosleyites was not meant to ensure the freedom of Rumania and England. "None would claim that the Congress Moslems of the frontier have the same political faith as that which inspires the Hindu members of the Congress party throughout the country as a whole."\*

Perhaps Abdul Ghaffar Khan's eyes were wide open, metaphorically as well as literally, when he asked us : "What have the folk of the Frontier Province to do with Hindustan ?"

#### *Pax Britannica*

Their home is a world apart, a strip of country measuring 350 miles from north to south-west, ninety miles at its broadest, and sometimes no more than ten miles wide. Its total area is scarcely twice as large as Wales, and it has been under British rule for less than a century. Yet no corner of the Empire has had a more turbulent.

\* Coupland trenchantly endorses this view of the alliance on pp. 121-123 of his *Indian Politics*. The N.W.F.P. had a Moslem League Government, supported by a majority in the elected legislature, from May 1943 to March 1945. The Ministry then fell and was replaced by a *soi-disant* Congress Government with Dr Khan Sahib, brother of A.G.K., as Premier —while in all other "Congress" provinces the party was still non-cooperating. As though to emphasise the difference, Dr. Khan Sahib said on May 8th that his Government's participation in the war effort was required for the benefit of India generally and the people of his province in particular—the province further than any other from any battle-front. One N.W.F.P. Congressman sat in the Central Legislature till August 1945 : he then went over to the Moslem League.

history, few have seen more adventure. Lions directed by far-away donkeys, giants obeying the chatter of pigmy busybodies, have loyally laid the gloss of great achievement, military and administrative, on the indefiniteness of a consistently negative policy. The gloss sometimes has been bungled or sullied, or "the man on the spot" has been expected to do something impossible even for him, and the offender or victim is discreetly pensioned off or smuggled away into an innocuous and honourable sinecure. Occasionally, too, the heavy wheels of routine have seemed to bite so deeply into their self-made groove that nothing could make them respond to the swing of time's compass. But beyond all doubt the keeping of this bastion of India, her landward gateway, has been an accomplishment for which you will not easily find a parallel in the story of the world. Whether it need have remained so arduous and costly a feat, so largely dependent on military and semi-military vigilance, is another question altogether,

This vigilance is conspicuous wherever you go, so that here, as nowhere else in India, the politician seems to be right when he calls the peace-time Army in India an Army of Occupation. Police armed with rifles stop you on the Attock Bridge and make you write your name and address in a register. Nowshera is first and foremost a military encampment. After a certain hour of the evening you may go no further, lest some wandering tribesman take pot-shots at your car. There are loopholed "pill boxes" at halts on the railway line beside the 24 miles of road from Nowshera to Peshawar. You enter Peshawar Cantonments by a guarded gateway in a perimeter of barbed-wire entanglement. An Army rank or title is attached to most of the names on the bungalow gateposts. When you go further afield you may pass now and again a small, square-cut business-like blockhouse, whence you are greeted with a shout of "Guard . . . 'shun !'" Look up, and through windows at the top of the blockhouse you can just see the genial faces of Frontier Constabulary, as fine a fighting force as any.

Your road may take you also to bigger forts manned by larger garrisons—forts of the kind you have seen in cinema-stories of the Foreign Legion in Morocco. You can easily visit half a dozen of them in a day.

As you move north-west from the debilitating climate of Hindustan, you become conscious of an increasing virility around you. Crossing the Indus appears to emphasise the change still more. Many Pathans may have leanings to theft and more unpleasant vices, to dirty work at the cross-nullahs, to a code of honour that has disconcerting lacunae in it. But they *have* a code ; they can display a good conceit of themselves without arrogance : they give respect spontaneously where respect is due, without trace of obsequiousness. British administrators here may have assimilated some of the unimaginativeness of the policy imposed on them, and distrust too often is the answer to distrust. But I know of no other part of India where contact between Western ruler and Eastern associate brought out so well, as complementary to one another, the best qualities of each when it really was association.

#### *Border-line Cases*

It is important, for the present, to remember the distinction between the "border" and the frontier. The N.W.F.P. proper consists only of the strip of country I have mentioned already. This is British-Indian ground administered in accordance with British-Indian law. Its status is similar to that of the other provinces behind it. The north-west *frontier* is the Durand Line, the real Indo-Afghan boundary. It is a daft, illogical line, for as often as not you will find people of the same clan or even family on either side of it. None other is recognized internationally as the limit of British responsibility ; British-Indian administration touches it nowhere save within the breadth of certain roads and at the far end of the narrow Kurram corridor to Parachinar. All else along the frontier, on our side of it, within the sphere of our international and imperial obligations, is the so-called

independent tribal territory—the “trans-border” country. It is an area much bigger than the North-West Frontier Province, yet none so large at that ; and for want of any better name to give them in such an anomaly we call its people “British-protected subjects.” Perhaps this is as good a reason as any other why they are almost annually at war with us somewhere, and why we shell, machine-gun them and bomb their villages in return.

These affairs are infinitely trivial in contrast with wars nearer home. I recall them because they are immediately relevant to the objective of this book and are circumstantial evidence for the idea to which Abdul Ghaffar Khan rather vaguely alluded. They have been habitual for generations ; but if you tour the roads that have seen “little wars” in a period no longer than the nineteen-thirties—when you had preoccupations enough on your European doorstep—you may notice that the mischief has not been diminished by use of modern armaments, and you may have patience to read other suggestions for remedying it.

First, then, to the moon-country of the Khyber. At a point about half-way between Peshawar and Jamrud you may see on either side of you two emblems of antitheses in Frontier policy. On the right stands Islamia College, an admirable place where “the sons of Frontier chieftains learn to appreciate the superiority of reason over force.” To the left, disappearing among low hills, and untouched by civilizing hand, are the Kajuri and Aka Khel plains. From these in 1930, the year when Peshawar went berserk, some thousands of armed Afridis over-ran Peshawar District and even menaced the sacred Cantonments. They were bombed from the air again and again all that summer, and for several more months a minor campaign had to be fought on the ground, with appropriate casualties, to retrieve a precarious situation.

In 1935, with the consent of local headmen, the Government stepped off the Khyber, some way beyond

Jamrud, to take a new road into the heart of Afridi territory. The road would have done the tribesmen good service, but many of them were suspicious of it, and they stopped it by a show of force. The work was resumed a few months later. Afridi *lashkars* sniped at the construction parties, burned a Government school, and gained their point once more. You can see the beginnings of the new road at Ali Masjid, and *sangars* (crude stone emplacements) on the crests of the hills above and beyond it. Those *sangars* command a longish stretch of the Khyber and overlook one of our own military outposts. Pickets of Afridi riflemen occupied them for the whole of 1936, cocking a snook at authority in contravention of a tribal agreement. (This behaviour we called "defiance"; when we do the same sort of thing in tribal territory it is "upholding prestige," "showing the flag," or a "routine movement.")

Past the inevitable walled villages, little forts, the big barracks at Landi Kotal, more forts, and so down to the gateposts of Afghanistan. On the near side a lackadaisical *khassada*, without arms or uniform, sits negligently on a convenient bit of rock and sees a joke in everything. On the other, two Afghan soldiers with rifles, bayonets, German shrapnel-helmets and what-not, alternately gossip at ease and goose-step to and fro. Yes, I've seen them goose-stepping . . .

North to Shabkadr, fifteen miles from Peshawar, and beyond it to Fort Abazai, by a road that has many times carried horse and foot, guns and armoured cars, on punitive expeditions into the Mohmand hills.

For two months in 1930 a Mohmand *lashkar* under the Haji of Turangzai skirmished in the neighbourhood of Shabkadr, hoping to raid Peshawar. Troops were sent up to hold the tribesmen within their own country, and for six weeks the Mohmand *lashkarwals* were bombed and bombed from the air, until they decided the game wasn't worth the candle.

In 1932 their Bajauri cousins, some miles further

north, marshalled *lashkars* for other mischief, and a few of their villages were bombed.

In 1933 the Bajauris misbehaved again. One or two of their villages were bombed, and a brigade of troops was sent to the border of their territory by way of putting a disciplinary pistol at their heads. A few weeks later Shabkadr's neighbours, the Halimzai, Burhan Khel and Isa Khel were attacked by Upper Mohmands from country closer to the Afghan border. The reason appeared to be that they had found favour in the Government's eyes and were being paid to be good. The Upper Mohmands, not paid to be good, gave vent to their jealousy by burning Halimzai villages; so they must be punished for being bad. Two brigades of troops marched up to protect the Halimzai (nominally) and to build a new road as far into the tribal area as the Indian exchequer would allow. Scrapping, sniping, skirmishing, artillery bombardments, bombings, and some first-rate engineering, lasted two months. Then the offending Baezai, Khwaezai, Musa Khel and so on promised to be good for quite a long time, and it was announced that "complete arrangements have been arrived at with the Halimzai, Isa Khel and Burhan Khel to protect the road."

In 1935 these same Burhan Khel and Isa Khel joined hands with the Baezai, Khwaezai, Musa Khel and so on, for a general assault on the road. Two brigades of troops moved up from Peshawar and Nowshera, and two more brigades later reinforced them from over a hundred miles away. With some sharp fighting the new road was extended over difficult country, still deeper into the Upper area. The operations culminated in a minor disaster. Two platoons of The Guides were sent without adequate support or contacts to take a narrow ridge where they were exposed to attack from three sides by overwhelming numbers of tribesmen. They fought and fell, to the last man. Captain Godfrey Meynell, a brilliant young officer, was given a posthumous V.C. Bombings, artillery bombardments, skirmishes and sniping lasted three months. . . .

N.N.E. from Peshawar *via* Mardan, on a journey and through scenery made famous by one of Winston Churchill's earliest books, and A. E. W. Mason : to Malakand and Chakdarra, on the road towards the mountain fastness of Chitral, where we keep one of our remoter garrisons.

In the political storms of 1930 Mardan was threatened by a Red Shirt mob, and an Assistant Superintendent of Police was butchered. In 1931, again, the place was virtually besieged by a Red Shirt army carrying no visible weapons but drilled, marshalled and rationed like a disciplined military force.

At Dargai a column of troops is concentrated every other year for its march to relieve the Chitral garrison. From here the road climbs gracefully, though sometimes steeply, along the face of hills that seem friendliness itself, above the green valley of the Swat Canal, which today provides light, power and hope to a steadily growing area of the province. Malakand in its time has seen its full of fighting and slaughter, yet nothing could look more peaceful than its trees, bungalows and perimeter wall, on the crest of a commanding ridge.

Beyond Chakdarra, normally the limit of an "unauthorised person's" travels on this route, the road passes through the mountain country of Dir, a State whose Nawab has served us well. In 1932 two sections of his people, the Painda Khel and the Sultan Khel, attacked outposts on the road; and were suppressed by the Nawab with the aid of troops from Chakdarra. In August of the same year there was more fighting between the Nawab's forces and a raiding *lashkar* of Salarzai and Shamozai tribesmen, under the Faqir of Alingar. The biennial relief of the Chitral garrison began next month, and the relieving troops had to be supported against tribal opposition by an emergency column sent up from the south. The tribesmen were ambushed more than once by the tactics they themselves most favour ; and the Shamozai were punished for days on end with bombings from the air which some Army officers thought excessive.

In 1934 the Alingar faqir was at it again—this time making trouble for our fiend the Wali of Swat—but was thwarted by the persistent agility of British-Indian troops.

In 1935 the Faqir returned to the charge once more. For the better control of a troubrous area, a road was being carried west and north-west from Dargai into the Loe Agra “salient,” recently incorporated in the Malakand Protectorate. The Faqir led a *lashkar* of Bajauris and Utman Khel against the road, and the Nowshera Brigade was sent up to deal with him. It occupied Loe Agra, but the main body of troops, as usual, was withdrawn too soon, and Mr. L. W. H. D. Best, an excellent Political Agent, was killed in an ambush with a handful of levies. . . .

South of Peshawar is Kohat, only thirty miles away and headquarters of the next administered district ; yet for reasons I cannot fathom we still allow the intervening area under British jurisdiction to be bisected by the Afridi salient, as it is called. This nuisance is six miles broad at its neck, about twenty at its head, and thrusts itself to within nine miles of the Indus. Not so long ago a wide detour round the head of the salient was the shortest line of communication between Peshawar and Kohat, if it could be negotiated at all. We now have a direct and very fine road across the neck of the salient, and it has become famous as the Kohat Pass.

The approach to the salient ends at a gate guarded by Aimal Chabutra fort. From that point to the top of the pass, on the far side of the salient, British authority narrows down to the width of the tarmac, under rules similar to those of the Khyber. You may see tribesmen, festooned with fire-arms, knives and bandoliers, trudging along the road ; but if, say, any two of them want to kill each other, they must just step off it. Also they should both step off on the same side—it doesn’t matter which—because to shoot across the road is a breach of etiquette, or perhaps something worse.

You could have no better symbol of these easy-going

ways than a certain familiar landmark on the edge of the road. Outside and in, it looks much less like an arsenal than a cattle-pen, but everyone knows what it is. A single step over its threshold will take you from a British military highway under British law into a factory where tribesmen are free to make, sell and buy the rifles and ammunition they so often fire at British and Indian troops. My own visit to the place was pre-arranged with its proprietor by high authority, and I was accompanied by a Pathan revenue officer acting under Government orders.

Near the top of the pass you may see the village from which Ajaib Khan and his gang set out to kidnap Molly Ellis and murder her mother. (You could shoot an arrow into the village if you had one.) Then from the summit of the pass you look down upon the green neighbourhood of Kohat and over the rolling country beyond. Kohat itself was another storm-centre of 1930, but in normal times it is pleasant enough. If you are lucky, you may drive westwards from here, through Hangu and Thal (ably captured by Nadir Khan when he fought against us in the Third Afghan War in 1919), and thence up the lovely Kurram valley to Parachinar, beneath snow-clad peaks running to 15,000 feet or more. The Turis of Kurram put up an excellent resistance when Orakzais attacked them in 1930; but there too a British force had to do its share of the fighting.

Or you may go on to Bannu, jumping-off ground for political and military experiments among the Wazirs, the largest, wildest, most difficult of all the frontier tribes, inhabiting 5,000 square miles of wicked contrasts.

Between 1852 and 1919 we sent seventeen major expeditions against them. They turned out in full force against us in the Third Afghan campaign, and refused peace when it ended. The war we then fought with them was the costliest and fiercest the border has ever seen. I have vainly tried to keep tally of the number of times their permanent pacification has been announced.

For over twenty years we have maintained in the heart of Waziristan, at places like Razmak and Wana, such military garrisons and outposts as are undreamed of in any other tribal territory. Yet consider, very briefly, what happened in the last decade.

In 1930 a *lashkar* 4,000 strong attacked the outpost at Datta Khel in North Waziristan, and a Mahsud force ran amok in the south. Troops and R.A.F. aircraft had to deal with both menaces.

In 1929, Wazirs and Mahsuds had flocked to support Nadir Khan when he recovered the Afghan throne from the usurper Baccha-i-Saqao. In February 1933 they turned against Nadir Khan, and gravely embarrassed our diplomatic relations with Kabul by swarming across the frontier into Afghanistan. We acknowledged an obligation to prevent this sort of thing, and a large cordon of troops, backed by the R.A.F., coerced the invaders to return only just in time. They tried the adventure again in September of the same year, and inflicted casualties on the Razmak Column when it went out after them. "The incursionists," said an official report, "were arrested on return, and not released until they had deposited security rifles to vouch for their future good behaviour."

In 1933 the Zilli Khel Wazirs attacked a detachment of South Waziristan Scouts, and the Wana Column had to discipline them. At a tribal *jirga* they paid a fine of rifles, and a deposit of more rifles as "security for their future good behaviour."

In 1935 the Hassan Khel Wazirs fired on Tochi Scouts near Spinwam, eighteen miles from Bannu, and a number of minor outrages followed, so that the R.A.F. had to end the year with a warning "demonstration."

In 1936 the Zilli Khel were at mischief again, and were punished by exclusion from their grazing grounds. That, however, was a petty triviality compared with the trouble beginning later in the same year.

A fourteen-year-old Hindu girl was led away from her home in Bannu to be married to a tribesman and con-

verted to Islam. Pressure by the British authorities secured her surrender to an independent guardian, pending litigation about her future. A Mohammedan was convicted of kidnapping her, and the highest civil court in the N.W.F.P. ordered her return to her parents. At this feeling ran high across the tribal border, for it was claimed that the girl had married and embraced Islam voluntarily. News also came of tension in Lahore, 250 miles away, where the Sikhs were disputing Shahid-ganj Mosque with the Moslems.

A Tori Khel Wazir, the Faqir of Ipi, made the most of these events. He called for a revolt against the Government's "interference with religion," and soon had the hotheads of his tribal section with him. Reports from Palestine stimulated them further, for the Pathan (at a distance) has a notable bond of sympathy with the Arab. The sequel is recent history, so I need not repeat its details ; but it is well to remember some instructive facts.

We began by sending two converging columns of troops to "show the flag" in the Khaisora Valley, the heart of Tori Khel Waziristan. A few hundred tribesmen made things hot for them in country ideally suited to Wazir tactics. The troops were reinforced. They imposed penalties and a "settlement" on the Tori Khel in January 1937, and most of them were then withdrawn.

A logical result of this was an accession of confidence to the Faqir. He found valuable allies and able lieutenants. His mischief spread over half or more of Waziristan, and across the border into the Bannu area, where numbers of Hindus were kidnapped, British officers were ambushed and killed. So back came the troops, the aircraft, and more troops, while scrapping and skirmishing and little spasms of quite grim fighting became more widespread and frequent as the months dragged on through seasons of fierce heat and acute cold. A typical incident, though the casualties in it were abnormal, was the ambuscade by a Mahsud *jirga* of a convoy of armoured cars, infantry and fifty lorries in Shahur Tangi, a long, narrow gorge

between precipitous rocks ; seven officers and twenty-two men were killed, and an escorting aircraft shot down. Now and again an outpost, lightly manned, would be beleaguered and sniped night and day—and defended with consistently high courage. At Datta Khel, for instance, some Tochi Scouts under a British officer were besieged off and on for four weeks in the summer of 1938, and bombarded by three home-made cannon. The same thing happened again at the same place in February 1939, when Squadron-Leader R. C. Mead won the Distinguished Flying Cross for relieving the post. Elsewhere the troops more than once outmanœuvred the tribesmen brilliantly, and their sappers built over a hundred miles of road under great difficulties. But raids into British-Indian territory continued, and it was a bad night when 200 tribesmen swooped into Bannu, sacked and burned parts of the town to the worth of £30,000, and stampeded a third of its Hindus in panic to the Punjab.

In May 1939, three thousand Tori Khel Wazirs walked to the British station at Miranshah to swear on the Quran, in the presence of the Political Agent, that the Government's enemies were their enemies, and that they would no longer give sanctuary to hostile tribesmen in their territory. But that did not end the trouble for good. Skirmishing, murder and sudden death continued off and on ; and, at the beginning of 1940, when all the Empire's military resources should have been engaged elsewhere, we had a small expeditionary force prowling about the Ahmedzai salient.

#### *Blind Spot and Blind Eye*

" We are now the conquerors of Waziristan—for about 500 yards on each side of the motor roads—and our only desire is peace. There are no commercial, no political and no religious advantages to be wrung from that barren land. ' The most extreme politicians in England will applaud any effort to improve the conditions of life and employment for the people in this sadly derelict portion of the Empire.

There seems to be nothing to prevent an amiable forward policy except our imperial in-growing toe-nails. So long as we are too timid to grasp the bull by the horns, so long to peace on the frontier!"

That was written by an admirable young Army officer several years ago, in the *Journal of the United Services Institute of India*. I wonder how often it has appeared to be true in the past, and how long it will go on being true.

The argument is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to all other parts of the tribal territory. I have shown that in the last decade before the war, within a recognized frontier of the Empire, we had military operations every year, usually more than once a year, and sometimes at different sectors of the border at the same time. Nor are they the whole story, for now and then the Frontier Constabulary and levies are engaged in affrays so common as not to be thought worth a perfunctory communiqué. They have been tiny whispers as modern war goes: I am sure they have made no impression whatever on 99 per cent. of Great Britain's people, if these have noticed them at all. We may think it is no concern of ours, but only of the Indian Government. In fact, it concerns us at least as much as did the troubles in Palestine, which excited us considerably.

Through their Parliament at Westminster, British voters are responsible equally for policy in Palestine and for policy in the tribal area of the Indian frontier (though not in the administered and autonomous area of the N.W.F.P. proper). Their obligations to any number of British troops, wherever they may be, are certainly as clear and as binding as their obligation to Arab Nationalists or Polish and Rumanian Zionists. The frontier tribesmen have been "British-protected subjects" far longer than Palestine has been a British mandate, and a much more chronic problem. Not many people at home noticed that nearly 40,000 troops—about twice the number of the Palestine garrison at its strongest—were campaigning in Waziristan at a time when we had need

to conserve all possible military energy against infinitely greater perils. Few have the least idea that as many troops were employed in the Mohmand expedition of 1935 as in Palestine during the troubles of 1938. Few realized that by the end of 1938 the Waziristan campaign had cost us about three times the contemporary military casualties in Palestine. In Parliament there were full-dress debates, and innumerable questions to Ministers, about the woes of the Holy Land and foreign refugees. There was not a minute's discussion of the troubles and fighting in Waziristan or of possible remedies for the imperial sore of which it is only the sorest spot. Nobody thinks it pernickety to cry aloud when he hears of food being wasted in an Army camp at home. Nobody seems to wonder how much longer we must tolerate the jerry-building of India's western gateway, a political *malaise* that does no one's appearance any good, and annual fireworks that end nothing except a few young lives and a few more dreams (in peace-time) of retrenchment.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HEALING A SORE

#### *Joys of Independence*

THE trouble seems to be that we cannot make up our minds just how independent the tribesmen are supposed to be ; so we try to have it both ways, and get neither, and they do the same. We insist on their remaining independent under conditions creating a *casus of the bellum* which their independence is intended to prevent. The argument runs rather like this :

"They are independent tribes. They are free, therefore, to live their lives in their own peculiar way, men of blood and iron as they are. We leave them to their

rude, often savage customs, their murderous feuds. Within our frontier, in this very India, on the threshold of relatively prosperous bazars governed by Britain's very different laws, half a million able-bodied warriors are at liberty to go about armed to the teeth, and we seem content that a quarter of a million of them invariably do. We even provide them with the means of buying arms and ammunition, by way of bribing them not to use their purchases against us.

"We enlist many of them in the Frontier Constabulary and the Army, and turn them into good soldiers. There are other reasons for suspecting they would make citizens no worse than their neighbours in the N.W.F.P. and the Punjab, if they had the same inducements and opportunities. But they are independent, we say, so it is not for us to apply these inducements. On the contrary, they must enjoy the privilege of stewing in their own juice. They must cherish the freedom of their isolation in barren hills and valleys. If they like (and they do) they can come down into Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, the Punjab, even Hindustan, to eke out by labour in the winter the wretched living their land yields them ; but we cannot do more than that for them. We say it is not for us to help them with irrigation, encourage them in agricultural development, assist their economic betterment, enlighten their ignorance, and so mitigate their bigotry and fanaticism.

"But of course we have our responsibilities, and these end on the Durand frontier, not at the administrative border on this side of tribal territory. The tribesmen's poverty, needs and untamed spirits are their own affair ; but certainly we must discipline them if, in their independent fashion, they seek an outlet that we cannot approve of. Those terrible rogues Ajaib Khan, Badshah Gul and Abdullah Jan have absconded to Afghanistan, where naturally we cannot and do not want to touch them! But let them once start trouble again in their own 'independent' country, and we will blow their villages to bits. 'It is clearly impossible,' said the

Peshawar Secretariat not long ago, ‘to permit a gang of desperadoes not only to establish themselves comfortably in close proximity to the border of a civilized country, but to use their place of harbourage as the base of their incursions.’”

Quite. But it is just as clearly difficult to prevent them if, while we thus proclaim our rights and obligations, we also consider their refuge so independent and so sacrosanct that indirect and impermanent methods of tackling them there must suffice. We “larn them” by bombing their homes, crops and pastures after duly warning them to evacuate ; or a couple of brigades march into their country, not with the smallest hope of catching the ringleaders except by very rare accident, but to punish their followers, teach them wisdom, and collect dubious bonds for their future virtue. The Sappers do miracles of road-building, for roads have acquired a mysterious magic in the language of frontier policy, and anyhow, they are always useful. A number of officers and men are killed : there may have been budding geniuses or potential field-marshals among them. Communiqués announce hopefully that the “enemy” (those British-protected subjects) are believed to have suffered worse. Their headmen are summoned into conference with the General and the Political Agent, not as delegates of a sovereign belligerent, or as combatants in a civil war, but as rebellious offenders against a Government suddenly revealed to be *their* Government, whatever may have been said about their status. They are told they have been very, very naughty and disobedient ; that they now have a lovely new road to help their communications and commerce ; and that they must do this, that or such-and-such in grateful contrition. They say they will, or anyhow will try. Then their tribal independence is abruptly remembered again ; the troops march back again, perhaps leaving a few outposts behind them ; soon all is in readiness for the umpteenth repetition of the same performance during the next shooting season ; and there remains on record, still partly true today, the

opinions ventured by a Viceroy over sixty years ago :

" I object to the system because it perpetuates a system of semi-barbarous reprisal ; because we lower ourselves to the ideas of right and might common to our barbarous neighbours, rather than endeavour to raise them to our own ideas ; because its natural tendency is to perpetuate animosity rather than lead up to good relations ; because as a rule it leaves no permanent mark."

Such, then, seems to have been our tip-and-run method, with occasional variations, for successive decades. Heaven knows what its cumulative cost has been in terms of Indian finance. Some military and civil experts have been bold enough to analyse it critically. They say it is a poor way of controlling or serving our subjects, if they are our subjects, or of securing the frontier and upholding prestige.

#### *New Problems*

In the words of officialdom, " the time has arrived when an effort should be made to bring under our control and, if possible, to organize for purposes of defence, the great belt of independent tribal territory which lies along our North-Western frontier." That was in a despatch written in 1887, from the Government of India to the Government of the Punjab. Little came of it, and it is even truer now than it was then, for new complexities have arisen.

(a) We have grim preoccupations in Europe and in the Far East ; we want no avoidable trouble within the Empire's remaining frontiers. Hence it may look equally improvident to choose this moment for grasping the tribal bull by the horns, or to leave him champing in his British-made paddock with the knowledge that every now and then he may try to break out into the Indian china-shop.

(b) Because of our preoccupations, we should be glad of something more than a negative peace along an anomalous Indian border. We should welcome a positive

contribution by the frontier people to the security and welfare of India, or so much of it as they can be induced to consider their own country. That would release from India, for strictly British purposes, a useful little reserve of British energies, and would certainly be to the interests of India *per se*.

(c) The 1887 despatch spoke of bringing the tribal territory under "our" control. Until a few years ago, that meant British control exercised within the jurisdiction of Delhi's responsibility to Whitehall, thousands of miles away. Policy therefore was liable to change with the varying whims and fortunes of personalities and parties at Westminster; but frontier administration on the spot—the handing-out and execution of orders—had the simplicity of dictatorship, or anyhow direction by a unitary Government wholly independent of Indian parties and votes and rivalry between Hindu and Moslem. All is now different, and will be still more different in years to come. Constitutional reform throughout India must necessarily affect treatment of the frontier problem. The tribesmen see their cousins and neighbours ruling the N.W.F.P. in all provincial matters except security of the tribal border. Next door to the N.W.F.P., their co-religionists are making the best of provincial autonomy in the Punjab, and hoping for further reform in Kashmir. The same has happened in Sind, adjoining both the Punjab and Baluchistan. It is intended also that such authority as is now reserved to an official bureaucracy at Delhi, under British control, shall be transferred to a responsible Indian Government and parliament, and at this Federal or Unitary Centre the Hindus are assured of predominance. They are an overwhelming majority of the country's people as a whole: they are bound to have unquestionable power in a majority of its eleven provinces: their Congress publicists have shown where they would like to put the Mohammedans. Nobody believes, I imagine, that policy on the tribal border can be kept altogether divorced from wrangles in a Federal or Unitary Parliament of All-India. Is it probable that

Pathan tribesmen and virile Punjabis will lightly accept Hindu interference from the Centre—least of all anything that savours of Congress fascism? Might they not reply: “Mind your own business if you want peace in Hindustan”?

### *Negative or Positive Peace*

The tribal territory, and in less degree the N.W.F.P., is in a position roughly analogous to the Sudetenland of unhappy memory. Just as most of the Sudetens were obviously more German than Czech, so are the Pathans more Afghan than Indian. Perhaps it is a pity we ever went beyond the Indus, in many ways a more logical frontier than either the Durand Line or the tribal border. But we cannot very well begin now to amputate the N.W.F.P., and a total surrender of all interest in the tribal hills beyond it would be similar to the Czechs' loss of their Bohemian frontier and fortifications (except that Afghanistan is a much better neighbour than Germany). So the critics argue that if we wish to maintain the Durand Line as the frontier of self-governing India, it is equally wrong (*x*) to do no more than we have done for the tribesmen on our side of the line, (*y*) to allow their territory to remain a hornets' nest, and (*z*) to waste good lives on ephemeral excursions towards the line without any attempt at real consolidation.

If there is substance in the dreams of soldiers and officials endowed with imagination, the alternative to this state of things is a choice between two constructive policies or an amalgam of them.

(*i*) We can say: “The Durand Line is our frontier *de jure*: we must proceed at once to make it so *de facto*.” We would tell Afghanistan what we proposed to do and seek her co-operation and understanding, for our tribal area has seldom, if ever, been strictly neutral in her domestic troubles. We would tell the tribes, too; work hard at propaganda to assure them that they will benefit in the long run; invite them to accept the situation and bury the hatchet. Some of them might, but a majority

would probably do the opposite, partly because we have seldom convinced them that we mean what we say for any length of time. Hence the troops employed would have to be many, the insignia of occupation impressive. The army would penetrate the country up to the Durand frontier by all strategical lines of advance, throwing out tactical strong-points *en route* and along the frontier. The tokens of occupation would be not only roads for military use and tribal commerce, but also generous schemes of irrigation, agricultural development, hospitals, the broadcasting that has served the N.W.F.P. so well, etc. The tribesmen's arms would be turned willy-nilly into ploughshares, and every effort would be made to secure fruit a hundredfold, to them alone, from improved cultivation and new fields for wage-labour. We would give them an administration assimilated, wherever possible, to their traditions. The *jirga*, for example, might remain the Court of first instance.

(2) But the financial cost of all this (it is argued) would so far exceed what India can afford at any one time that a long view of future saving would be impracticable. Critics also wonder whether it would really solve the problem or merely push it further away among the hills on the actual frontier. On the Afghan side of the Durand Line are kinsmen of our tribes. Maps mean nothing to them, arbitrary boundaries little. If they were to bother us, the affair might become international, and that would make matters worse: we could not possibly chase and chasten them as we pursued the Afridis, say, after their inroads in 1930. (But for some years the Afghan Government seems to have had them well in hand.) Perhaps, then, we might fall back on a suitably liberalized version of what is called the close-border policy.

From four to six thousand Afridi families come down into Peshawar and beyond every year to earn their winter's keep, and I have met rather pathetic groups of Bajauris and Mohmands doing the same. The threat that we will prohibit this seasonal migration has been

enough, at times, to check mischief by a tribe at large. If, then, the policy of penetration won't do, let us strengthen the Frontier Constabulary, with a proportionate saving (perhaps) in the Army Budget. Re-occupy, equip and greatly extend what used to be called the Mohmand blockade line, or something like it, along the administrative border. Make it clear to the tribesmen beyond peradventure that hostile bodies trying to cross this line will be hit very hard indeed and that armed men within range of it will be fired at. Otherwise never, never harass them in their own territory as we have to do now. Open special courses of appropriate instruction for their kith and kin now settled with Government pensions in British India, and send these to preach the gospel of co-operation in tribal country (we do a little of this sort today, in emergencies). Invite or even urge the tribesmen to come along peaceably and avail themselves of greatly enlarged facilities for trade, employment, vocational training and the like in British India. Require them in advance to pay for these facilities, and for entry into British territory, with the permanent surrender of arms in stated quantities, and with returnable sureties, if possible, for their good behaviour both there and in their homes. Encourage them to improve their own internal trade-routes, irrigation and general standards of living, with the help of loans, technicians, doctors and other trained men sent among them for the purpose—preferably men of their own stamp, and anyhow people in whom they have confidence, *not* "politicals." Get them, if they will, to pay for this help also with an agreed measure of disarmament ; and give them a good price in return for whatever they wish to sell us. (A few years ago the Chitralis took delighted interest in the successful results of research by the Government of India into the possibilities of growing special, high-altitude wheat and barley in their country.) Strive always for peaceful penetration of their territory by virtue of influence and services which they appreciate, not by "political" guile ; for that very word, borrowed from the name of the

Government's Political Service, has passed into the frontier's vernacular as a synonym for sharp practice. "The intelligence of the Pathans," says Sir William Barton, "is much higher than that of the general run of Indian peasantry."

Either of these policies, or an amalgam of them, or any better course, must have for its ultimate object the civilized administration of tribal territory within a comity of Indian provinces. We cannot leave it high and dry, like a sort of confused No Man's Land, between a self-governing India and her real international frontier. We want the Pathans to look inward upon India (or part of it) as their home, not outward for leadership or inspiration in holy wars of rapine over Indian plains.

Sir W. Barton says, in *India's North-West Frontier* :

"The rudimentary self-government that prevails across the Pathan border develops self-reliance, courage, resource, sobriety, a Spartan outlook. The rivalry of faction and party in the tribal councils sharpens the wits ; contact with British officers, service in the Army or irregular corps, work in the same direction. There is no caste in border society : every Pathan thinks himself as good as another. In fact, the political climate of the Frontier is healthier for the delicate plant of democracy than anywhere else in India."

But where in India are the Pathans' constructive possibilities to be rallied and focussed with their neighbours ? What sort and seat of central authority can they be induced to acknowledge with any satisfaction ? If the Simon Commission and Joint Parliamentary Committee were right in the opinions I have cited on page 12, and if all the signs and tokens mean what they obviously suggest, we can hardly expect submission by militant zealots of Islam to the laws of a Hindu majority-vote at Delhi. A federal authority there, recruited from Madras, Bombay, Bihar, the United Provinces, and so on, and representing peoples, interests and ideas remote from the Pathan mind, would seem at least as alien to the tribesmen as the present British mixture of bribery, camara-

derie and battery. We can do something more hopeful than that, for them and for peace in the borderland. We can offer them a square deal and tolerable amenities in their own regions ; let them see a new Commonwealth Government established at Lahore on principles they can appreciate, and representing a compact union of territories and peoples having interests akin to theirs ; let that Government seek by all means their co-operation with it. It is possible they may then at last reconcile themselves to a new and better way of life within our comity of nations and citizenship. That would be a worth-while result of one clause in the Cripps proposals, even if nothing came of the others.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GREAT DIVIDE

"Our ideal remains a united India . . . but we would sooner see India divided and free than keep her various elements for ever chafing against us and against each other under a sense of impotent frustration."—(Mr. Amery, as Secretary of State for India, in the House of Commons, April 28th, 1942.)

IN bare outline the Big Idea is short and simple—much more so than arguments for and against it.

If you take numbers-cum-vigour as the yardstick, Mohammedanism is most conspicuously concentrated, most virile and self-contained, in the north-west corner of India. Here are the Punjab, Kashmir and Jammu, the Frontier Province and tribal agencies, Sind, Baluchistan, and the Moslem States of Bahawalpur and Khairpur. It is proposed that this bloc of seven contiguous territories should become the Dominion of Pakistan,\* with a Federal or Central Government at Lahore. As the eastern marches of the Punjab have a robust majority

\* The name is interpreted by some to mean "land of the pure in heart." Others would rather make it Pakstan, calling the Pathans Afghan, and so accepting the alternative explanation that the letters of the word stand for Punjabis, Afghans, Kashmiris, Sindis and Baluchis(tan).

of Sikhs and Hindus, appropriate districts of this area would be transferred to what is now the Delhi enclave, so that the River Sutlej, or the Sutlej and Beas, would form a natural boundary for Pakistan. All the rest of India—except for a small area I shall mention later—would be the Dominion of Hindustan, with a federal capital at Calcutta or Lucknow. It would consist of eight British-Indian provinces and a few hundred States.

Do you think the scheme means a “Balkanisation” of India, or the creation of something like Ulster? Then look at the maps at either end of this book. One of them is clear at a glance. For the other, the draftsman dissected a map of Europe on the same scale and fitted twenty of its countries, like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, into the outline of India. Their combined population is less than India’s, and they do not completely fill her map. The whole of Ireland is very little bigger than the largest of the five Commissioners’ Divisions in the Punjab. A partition of Palestine was suggested quite seriously, by responsible statesmen, for a purpose similar to Pakistan’s—to facilitate peacefully the self-determination of each of the two principal communities in Palestine, or to prevent either of them gaining control over the whole country at risk of explosive injustice. India is about 180 times bigger than Palestine, and lends itself to partition more naturally. Now for more detail.

### *Pakistan*

Approximate population today on basis of 1941 census :

	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Moslem</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Sikh</i>
Punjab*	20,001,000	13,826,000	2,965,000	2,544,000
Kashmir ..	4,100,000	3,135,000	824,000	67,000
Frontier*	5,500,000	5,222,000	201,000	63,700
Sind .. ..	4,626,000	3,272,000	1,255,000	32,000
Bahawalpur	1,200,000	946,000	168,000	42,000
Khairpur ..	260,000	208,000	44,000	?
Baluchistan	875,000	801,000	56,000	12,000
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>36,562,000</b>	<b>27,410,000</b>	<b>5,513,000</b>	<b>2,760,700</b>

\* (The figures for the Punjab presuppose that ten of the districts in the Ambala and Jullundur Divisions would be detached from the Punjab and

The Moslem share of populations in Indian territories bordering Pakistan is : U.P., 16 per cent. ; Delhi, 33 per cent. ; Rajputana, 9.8 per cent. ; and Western India States Agency, 13 per cent.

The Pakistan area is only a quarter of India, with less than a tenth of her people. Yet it would have roughly sixty-five times the area of Ulster and twenty-six times its population—nearly 25 per cent. more than the aggregate population of the other British Dominions outside India. It would be approximately equal in size to England, Wales, France and Italy combined. It would have at least as many people as Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Greece and Norway put together. Only Germany and Japan think these countries too small for independent sovereignty, and that is one reason why we have been fighting the Axis.

There is naturally less variety of languages in Pakistan than in Hindustan. Except for the remotest Kashmiris, its people are less different from one another than from many of the peoples in Hindustan ; and from these they are more conspicuously distinct, in many ways, than several peoples in Europe are different from one another. That, of course, is particularly true of such types as the Pathans, Baluchis, tribal Sindis and Jammu Mohammedans ; they are nearly as dissimilar from the Madrasis, Bengalis and generality of Bombay, for instance, as any two human races in one continent can be. It is little less true of the Punjabis, who often show that they know it.

The proposed transfer of certain areas to the Delhi enclave would carry with it more than 40 per cent. of the Sikhs and over half of the Punjabi Hindus, lest they grow uncomfortable under Moslem supremacy and embarrass the Pakistan Government at Lahore. But in spite of communal friction I have heard some Punjabi Hindus make it a proud boast that they have more in common with Punjabi Mohammedans than with their Pakistan, because in those districts there is a biggish Hindu-Sikh majority. I have not reckoned-in the Punjab States, other than Bahawalpur, as they would probably go with the detached districts. The figures for "Frontier" include the tribal and State Agencies, as well as the N.W.F.P.)

own co-religionists in other parts of India. I have mentioned their community of interest in the soil and the Army, which affects the province's life profoundly and beneficially. A tiny token of the same feeling was an experience of prominent Punjabi Moslems visiting Calcutta : because they were unmistakeably Punjabis, Sikh taxi-drivers there refused to let them pay more than half the usual fares.\*

No considerable area of Pakistan suffers so habitually as do parts of Hindustan from the disturbing, fissiparous influences of urban life. I may be guilty of wish-thinking, but there does seem to be some cause for hope that the Hindus and Sikhs remaining in Pakistan would be able to make friendly, common cause with the Mohammedan majority in the interests of a new, not unwieldy, and therefore comprehensible, national entity.

A more obvious point : communalism is normally most explosive where the rival strengths of communities are least unequal and/or when each thinks it may gain by hostile pressure against the other. That temptation could hardly arise in Pakistan, or in a separate Dominion of Hindustan. But friction in Pakistani provinces has been encouraged by the intrusive infection from elsewhere of disputes that need not have affected them. For instance :

In 1939, on behalf of their industrial capitalists in Bombay mills, the Congress group in the Central Legislature voted against an increase of the import duty on raw cotton. This duty was intended to give revenue-bearing protection to Indian cotton-growers ; the Punjab produces the biggest crop, and Sind, another Moslem province, is trying to expand its cotton plantations.

The Punjab owes much to the fact that it provides the

\* Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, revolted against a Hinduism that he held to be overloaded with ceremonial, social restrictions and tyranny of priesthood. He taught that there was only one God of all mankind. True Sikhism also rejects idolatry, the doctrine of caste, and intoxicants. For all of these reasons the religion would seem to be much closer to Islam than to Hinduism, and that affinity perhaps helps relations between the two communities more than they know. But how many people of any faith—Christianity included—are strictly true to its code ?

backbone of the Indian Army, and one way of punishing naughty tribes on the Frontier is to stop their enlistment in the Army ; so there was a communal riot of words between elected members of the Central Legislature when the Congress opposed a Bill, supported by the Punjab Government, to check seditious propaganda against recruiting.

If Pakistan and Hindustan had been separate Dominions, each might have handled these two subjects in its own way without treading on the other's corns.

The prospect of a Federal Government and Parliament for a single self-governing India promises the Hindus of Hindustan supreme power at the Federal Centre. Their political careerists—especially the Congress—want to make the most of the opportunity to overlook, counter or subordinate the strong Moslem element in Pakistani regions. They “play down” the importance of the Punjab : they “play up” Pakistani Hindus. The Moslems reciprocate, with hostility (among other things) to a Federation that would subject them to the Hindus’ majority rule throughout India. All this may conform with the queer rules of the game in politics, but it excites communal feeling in the Punjab and Sind, and sometimes in Kashmir and Bahawalpur. Most of their people should have been, and gladly would have been, spared such aggravation of their difficulties. They certainly do not want the authoritarianism of a Congress that has less support in the Punjab than in any other British-Indian province. The causes and peril of the mischief might shrink very noticeably if its motives were negatived by the separation of Pakistan and Hindustan, the one under Moslem and the other under Hindu supremacy.

Sometimes you hear a protest that Pakistan is impossible because its Hindus would be “at the mercy of the Mohammedan majority.” But in the same way a very much larger majority of Hindus in Hindustan would have more Moslems “at their mercy” than there would be in Pakistan—and provinces of Hindustan have suffered more communal bloodshed. The suggested partition can be

defended as the least impracticable means of signifying India's great religio-racial division in politico-geographical terms : as the only means of satisfying the legitimate ambitions of Hindu and Moslem alike for a Dominion that each community may call its own, and of giving each a governmental system appropriate to its distinctive characteristics. They might then have less quarrel with their minorities. Alternatively, the minority in one Dominion would be hostages for the good behaviour of its co-religionists in the other. Hideous thought : but the same thing happened under the existing Constitution in provinces where the Congress ruled, and it is fairly sure to happen under any system of provincial self-government. Moslems say that if there were an All-India Federal Government and Parliament they would be hostages to Hindu fortune everywhere ; so the Pakistan idea is favoured by Mohammedans in Hindu provinces (e.g., Mr. Jinnah himself) where it cannot directly benefit them.

A few critics may say Kashmir ought not to be in Pakistan because its ruling dynasty is Hindu. But remember what the State has suffered from this rule. There must be a limit to a single family's embarrassment of great undertakings. If the Hindu autocracy in Kashmir cannot be induced to federate with Pakistan—as certain Moslem States are expected to federate with Hindustan—let it exchange seats with the Moslem dynasty that rules a Hindu majority in Bhopal.

Is Pakistan possible economically ? Here are the answers I have seen so far, excluding the most facile from optimistic Moslem protagonists :

(a) By Sir Reginald Coupland, in pp. 91–96 and Appendix IV of his report, *The Future of India*. His reply covers a region much smaller than the Pakistan projected here, though including its largest deficit areas : yet it is not entirely unfavourable. His gravest doubts arise from the cost of frontier defence, for which I have already suggested one mitigant and will point to another presently under the heading *Imparsia*.

(b) By Sir Hormasji Mody and Dr. John Matthai, as

members of the Sapru "Conciliation" Committee in the spring of 1945. They were its industrial and economic advisers, they do not belong to Pakistan, and their committee was hostile to it. But according to Reuter's abstract of their report they summed up with two propositions. "(i) Judged solely by the test of ability to maintain existing standards of living and to meet budgetary requirements on a pre-war basis, but excluding provision for Defence, separation would appear to be economically workable. (ii) A pre-requisite would be means of effective and continuous co-operation between the separate States in matters affecting the safety of the country and its economic stability and development. Without such co-operation the position of both Pakistan and Hindustan might be seriously jeopardised" (see under *Imparsia* below).

(c) The Punjab, with well over half of Pakistan's population, was found to be the only Indian province needing no rebates from the Centre when Sir Otto Niemeyer recommended adjustments between central and provincial finance. Apart from her agricultural strength, the Punjab has a variety of industries whose improvement might well be stimulated by Pakistan's independence. Sind looks forward to the time when the great irrigation dam across the Indus at Sukkur will make the province self-supporting. Its capital, Karachi, is a growing seaport that carried roughly a ninth of India's foreign trade before the war, with a favourable balance ; and Karachi is also the airport of entry into India for all the great air-lines from Europe to Australia and the Far East. The products of Kashmir are renowned. I have not heard whether there is any truth in the story that a healthy seam of gold has been found there, but reliable authorities believe the State has untapped resources. The Maharaja cannot really need twelve times the Viceroy's salary. Given co-operation by the border tribesmen with a congenial Government at Lahore, both the new Dominions would be spared the present cost of fighting them annually, the expense of

frontier administration would be reduced, and there might be some expansion of overland trade with Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia.

(d) By a Moslem : "Can you imagine Britain ever waiving her right to freedom on the sole ground of difficulty or inability to balance her Budgets?"

### *Hindustan*

Hindustan obviously needs less apology. From many points of view it would seem to be "the real India" shedding only a surplus limb that is not entirely natural to it.

Even if a Moslem part of Bengal were amputated (I shall come to that presently), Hindustan would still be the seventh largest country in the world. It would have two-and-a-half times as many people as the U.S.A. It would consist at least of Western Bengal, most of Assam, and Bihar, Orissa, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Bombay, Ajmer, Coorg, the great States of Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore and Baroda, and a host of other States, including all of Rajputana. It would have two of the foremost sea ports in the East—Calcutta and Bombay, as well as others—and the wealthiest regions of India.

Perhaps some critics have been saying or thinking : "Yes, but what about your party-political argument? Is Hindustan to suffer the Congress fascism which you make one of your excuses for the partition?"

One of them only. I hope the "party-political" theme has been valid and weighty, but I did not mean to suggest that Hindu antipathy to the Moslems, or ambition for a communal hegemony, is a Congress monopoly. I have mentioned, for instance, a considerable and avowedly communal organisation, the Hindu Mahasabha ; and Hindu opposition to the distressed Kashmiris did not come only from Congress newspapers, though they were fiercest. Even if we could ignore party policies and ambitions, the cleavage between the two great communities would justify a partition to protect and placate each of them with a Constitution after its own heart.

I have made the disingenuous point that it is not my business to judge whether authoritarian rule by the Congress would be bad for each and every region of India. "The party might produce leaders who would do as much for their own provinces as Kemal did for Turkey and Salazar for Portugal." I have said that several Congress Ministers did or began good work while they were in office. But the party's greater mischief has risen, as I have tried to show, from three related causes :

(a) the forcible expression the Congress has given to the militant communalism of the Hindus it represents ;

(b) its refusal to acknowledge the physical and political limits of its constitutional rights and capacity ;

(c) the struggle between Congress ambitions and the democratic rights of others for a decisive influence in the Supreme Government of a future India.

No party can be allowed throughout India the status of "the only institution to succeed British imperialism." No party should rule where it is not wanted and has no mandate. Let a partition of India induce in the Congress a more modest appreciation of its scope and responsibilities, or keep it willy-nilly where it belongs if it cannot be persuaded.

That the party "belongs" to Hindustan can and must be admitted, I think, and any unpleasantness it may cause there is an argument for a Pakistan, not against it.

Many people wonder why opposition to the Congress has been negligible or ineffective in so many Hindustani provinces. Surely the reason is plain. With the reforms of 25 years ago Madras, like the Punjab, developed a constructive political sense, thanks mainly to the energy of a few far-sighted men.\* Elsewhere, it was at once a strength and weakness of Indian politics that for years they had meant little more than agitation *against* something. Under the then Constitution no party could hope for office-cum-power, so that an urge to compete or

\* The Justice Party did for Madras what the Unionists did for the Punjab ; but internal difficulties ruined its chances at the 1937 elections, and it was swamped almost out of existence by the Congress.

plan for popular favour was rare. There was negligible stimulus to creative political vitality outside the movement against alien rule ; and this agitation had been so absorptive of passive interest and available energy, so concentrated in the Congress machinery, that other parties thought they had little to do or even mistrusted their own *raison d'être*.

If they cannot now pull themselves together and make a fight for it, that is their funeral : our right to stimulate them and retrieve their chestnuts from the pyre is strictly circumscribed. Nor can we, as aliens, easily enforce our " safeguards " for minorities in any part of India where the safeguards conflict with an electoral expression of a great majority's will. But when the strongest Moslem element is satisfied by the creation of Pakistan, when in each of the separated Dominions there are " hostages " for fair treatment of their co-religionists in the other, and when the distractions of communal rivalry shrink accordingly—then the political minorities in Hindustan may find time and heart for the sort of Opposition that a democracy needs.

### *East Bengal*

Bengal is a greater difficulty. Its Moslem majority is over a third of all the Mohammedans in India, and is seven hundred miles from Pakistan at the nearest. This distance means that the problem of Bengal, even if insoluble, should not be allowed to interfere with the status of Pakistan ; but what becomes of one important purpose in the plan if the Bengal Moslems are forgotten, or reckoned as Hindustanis ? Perhaps there is a choice of answers.

(i) The basic problem stated in my original extracts from two Reports to Parliament affects most particularly the relations between Pakistan and Hindustan. It is in Pakistan that a virile Indian Mohammedanism is most conspicuously concentrated. It is the distinguishing characteristics of Hindustan and Pakistan that are most likely to aggravate disastrous conflict if a single Federal

Parliament, with a large majority from the one dominating a minority from the other, becomes obtrusive over the whole country. Whatever their faith, Pakistanis differ from Hindustanis more markedly than, say, the Bengal Mohammedan differs from his Hindu neighbours. In the Bengal legislature the small European bloc holds the balance of power, since a curious decision—resented by many Moslems but possibly prudent—denied the Mohammedans an elective reflection of their popular majority. For these reasons, and because the Bengal communities are perhaps exceptionally interdependent, the whole province might be able to make good as an integral unit of Hindustan.

(ii) But what if it cannot? Suppose the Moslems of Bengal refuse to stand out of the Pakistan sun, or the Federal Government of Hindustan makes things too uncomfortable for them? As things are, the political preponderance of Moslems in the province is a penalty the Hindus brought on themselves (assuming it to be a penalty). If their hotheads had not agitated with bomb, book and scandal against the partition of Bengal in 1905, the Hindus might have become by now the rulers of Western Bengal. Instead, they so assailed the creation of a Mohammedan Eastern Bengal that the partition was revoked six years later. So for provincial business the 25,000,000 Bengali Hindus are now a minority community lacking adequate political outlets for their unquestionable gifts. They may try to get their own back by pressure through the Federal Centre; but that would only aggravate the mischief we want to avoid. Bengal has had many bad communal riots.

We ought to reject, I think, a proposal that the whole of Bengal should be detached from Hindustan with a Constitution like Burma's. *Faute de mieux*, the province might be divided on lines less drastic than Lord Curzon's, so that the districts east of the river Brahmaputra would be an outpost of Pakistan—as Alaska is of the U.S.A.—or perhaps of the Delhi enclave. This colony would then consist of the Chittagong and Dacca Divisions (*minus*

Faridpur and Bakarganj districts) and possibly the Sylhet district of Assam, which is more Bengali than Assamese and has a biggish Moslem majority. It would be no very great cut out of Bengal, but its area would be bigger than Orissa or the Frontier Province. With nearly 16,000,000 Moslems and 6,000,000 Hindus (including Sylhet) it would have more people than either Sind, the Central Provinces or the North-West Frontier Province, Assam or Orissa, to say nothing of several European countries. It would have a sea-port at Chittagong. Western Bengal would have approximately equal proportions of Moslems and Hindus. The scheme might work as an antidote to communal anomalies and jealousies.

I think you will find a total of approximately 330,000,000 people in the Hindustan contemplated by the plan. About 236,300,000 would be Hindus, including a tiny minority of Sikhs, and roughly 48,000,000 would be Moslems.

### *Imparsia*

All the calculations and statistics mentioned so far take account of an ancillary scheme for the Delhi enclave. This subsidiary but important project should satisfy the demands already quoted for "effective and continuous co-operation between the separate States in matters affecting the safety of the country and its economic stability." It would meet Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan's stipulation—in an article in *The Times*—for a "common system of defence, tariff policy and currency."

The Delhi enclave at present covers 573 square miles—only six times the area of Malta—and has about a million people. In political status and purpose it resembles District Columbia in the U.S.A. and Canberra in Australia. It is administered by officers of the Central Government: for the Federal or Central Government, Parliament and Supreme Court, it provides a territorial home detached from any province: it symbolizes and protects their impartial immunity from provincial rivalries

—their independence of any provincial authority's care. I am going to mention analogous and other motives for preserving the enclave, but must first say something about its proposed enlargement.

I have explained why a large part of the Amballa and Jullundur Divisions, in the eastern marches of the Punjab, might well be carved off Pakistan. This slice would contain about 4,700,000 Hindus, 1,300,000 Sikhs, and 2,700,000 Moslems. It could be added to Hindustan, as a slightly awkward excrescence. But that would aggravate the risk of infectious communalitis athwart the Paki-Hindustan border, because the arrangement would be resented by some and unopposed by others in the transferred area. So we think the slice should be added to the enclave, increasing its area and population to roughly twice the size of Switzerland's, and making it a convenient buffer between the two big Dominions.

If they chose to remain in the British Empire, Hindustan and Pakistan would each have a Governor-General. They would be sovereign States, politically independent of one another, but they would be held together in an Indian Commonwealth by their common recognition of the Crown. As a symbol of this bond, and for the practical discharge of his Commonwealth responsibilities, the King would still be represented by a Viceroy with a seat in the Delhi enclave.\* In its strictly domestic affairs the enclave could be a condominium administered jointly by elected representatives of its own people, and of the Hindustan and Pakistan Parliaments, with the Viceroy as chairman. In well-deserved compliment to their community, I hope that Sikhs would be given an important place in the Government of Delhi.

This same neutral but representative Administration would be responsible for harmony between the two Dominions and for India's continental defence—her Navy, Air Force and the greater part of her Army. It would

\* The Governor-General of Pakistan might occasionally be an eminent Hindustani, and of Hindustan an eminent Pakistani. The Viceroy, Governors-General and provincial Governors would have to be less expensive than they have been.

realise, on a miniature scale, the ideal of an International Force. Hindustan and Pakistan each might want some militia of its own for internal security, but could not afford two complete and self-sufficient systems of defence. They would obviously share a common interest with one another and the rest of the Empire in the defence of India as a sub-continent against danger from any foreign quarter, and the disposition of forces in and around a sub-continent so large and vulnerable should be the duty of an authority impartial between the two Dominions. It follows that most of the Customs revenue collected at their ports and frontier *douanes* would still have to go to that authority ; though in Federations worth having the Indian States, the principalities, would contribute more than they do, in their own interests. We may hope, but cannot insist, that unlike some of the Indian States today the two Dominions would be able to dispense with supplementary Customs levies of their own. The authority at Delhi would control India's continental currency, and also her trans-continental communications that already have a rendezvous at Delhi.

A few may wonder whether the enclave and its Authority are essential to the Paki-Hindustan partition. But I believe it would smooth the way and stimulate a sense of commonwealth citizenship in India and Empire. When we talk of Dominion status we are apt to forget that India cannot be expected to derive this sense from all the same sentiments that inspire the unity with Britain of three other Dominions at least. Indians have shown a great and admirable loyalty to the person of the Crown. A few of those who visit England speak of going "Home," perhaps by force of habit unconsciously borrowed from European custom. Very occasionally an Indian will call Britain the Mother-land when he refers to the Empire. But obviously Indians do not own with us those ties of origin, blood and race, that knit together the British in Britain, the Australians, the New Zealanders, Canadians and Newfoundlanders. We should give Indians some alternative

bond in their own land, and it is not enough by itself that a proper and elementary self-interest will show them the way. We should exchange with them other acknowledgements and tokens of all that they have done for us and we for them. They must be free, sovereign peoples, and with that freedom should be joined telling and creative symbols, for instance, of a common allegiance to the Crown, of service by the Crown to them, and of the interest that we and they undoubtedly share in the security of India and the welfare of her peoples. That would be a most important purpose of Imparsia, of enlarging the area and maintaining only whatever is best in the constitution of functions of Imperial Delhi.

[Note Fragments of this and the next chapters have been adapted from the author's article on "Two Indias" in the *Contemporary Review* of June, 1940.]

## CHAPTER X

### DIVIDE AND FREE

"Our victory will be your victory. In our new order will be no slave States. There will be a community of free peoples, each working out its own problems, not upon a uniform pattern imposed by foreign power, but in accordance with its own temperament and traditions; and above that will be a union of peoples, each of whom will sacrifice something of its political and economic independence for the good and for the defence of the community as a whole."—*Mr. Harold Nicolson, speaking to Swedes, in 1941, as a Junior Minister of the Crown.*

Is Pakistan a fantastic dream? Many say "yes," though not all of them can explain clearly why. The Moslems are not the only people in India who have said "no."

The Executive Council of the (Indian) Independent Labour Party met in 1940 to discuss the scheme. This

I.L.P. has no affinity or close resemblance to our own James Maxton's. Its importance can be exaggerated, but its political philosophy is closer to ours than the Moslem League is, and very much closer than the Congress. Its Executive Council, and an *ad hoc* committee appointed by it, took no exception to the "underlying idea" of the Pakistan project. Few of their members are Moslems : all or nearly all are Bombay men, and so are not even potential Pakistanis. They asked for a report on the scheme by their chairman, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. He is a barrister, a former Principal of the Law College in Bombay University, and represented the Hindu Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conference.

In his *Thoughts on Pakistan* Dr. Ambedkar travels far and wide and deep for historical and contemporary, mundane and philosophical, vindication of Pakistan. He cites a battery of learned and other authoritics, precedents and analogies. He examines alternatives. He does not squander excessive sympathy on the Moslems' tactics in political bargaining. Evidently he would not agree that the social and cultural gulf between Hindu and Moslem is always so wide as the Simon Commission and the Joint Parliamentary Committee thought it. His meaning is occasionally elusive. But reduced to its simplest content, his argument boils down to these random quotations from his Report :

"The Hindu Nationalists who rely on self-determination, and ask how Britain can refuse India what the conscience of the world has conceded to the smallest European nations, cannot in the same breath ask the British to deny it to other minorities.

"The Hindu Nationalist, who hopes Britain will coerce the Moslems into abandoning Pakistan, forgets there is no material difference between the right of nationalism to freedom from an aggressive foreign imperialism and the right of a minority to freedom from an aggressive majority's nationalism.

"The Hindu knew it had become an accepted principle that a people who constituted a nation were entitled on that account to self-government. He knew that any patriot

seeking self-government for his people had to prove they were a nation. But he never cared to reason whether nationality was merely a question of *calling* a people a nation or of *being* a nation. He knew one thing . that he must maintain, even if he could not prove, that India was a nation if he was to succeed in his demand for self-government for India.

" In depending upon certain common features of Hindu and Mohammedan social life, in relying upon common language, common race and a common country, the Hindu is mistaking what is accidental and superficial for what is essential and fundamental.

" The mischief is caused, not so much by the existence of mutual antagonism between Hindu and Moslem, as by the existence of a common theatre for its display. When the two are called to participate in acts of common concern, what else can happen except a display of their inherent antagonism ? The Pakistan scheme has this advantage, namely, that it leaves no theatre for the display of that antagonism, no necessity for a third party to maintain peace.

" On the footing that India is to be one integral whole, a frustration of all her hopes of freedom is writ large on her future. The Hindus see that the Moslem strategy is to bring them out of the protecting shield of the British Empire and then subjugate them. The Moslems fear that under Dominion Status the Hindus will establish Hindu *raj* by benefit of the principle of one man one vote, one vote one value ; and that however much the benefit is curtailed by ' weightage ' to Muslims, the result cannot fail to be a Government of the Hindus, by the Hindus and therefore for the Hindus.

" Compare with this dark vista, the vista that opens out if India is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. The partition opens the way to a fulfilment of the destiny each may fix for itself. Muslims will be free to choose for their Pakistan independence or Dominion Status, whichever they think good for themselves, freed from the nightmare of Hindu *raj*. Hindus will be free to choose likewise for their Hindustan, and save themselves from the hazard of Muslim *raj*. Thus the path of political progress becomes smooth for both : the fear of frustration gives place to hope<sup>d</sup> of fulfilment."

You may say Dr. Ambedkar swings to and fro between a counsel of perfection and a counsel of despair, neither of them justified. But had we done much better till Cripps went to India in 1942? I do not pretend the Pakistan idea has obvious and immediate advantages only and no snags. Consider it, if you like, as a tentative project to avoid crises not yet proved insoluble by untried means, to mitigate difficulties before they become calamitous. It will therefore go on being frowned at because it is our national habit to sit idle until danger has overtaken us. Though dreams of Pakistan have been toyed with since 1923, they are still supposed to be novel; the official soul seldom takes kindly to novelty; and Parliament in peace-time is shy of innovation in its responsibilities overseas. But our aims and enemies in war should be enough to stimulate *new* ideas for the buttressing of Indian liberty against communal fascism.\*

There is also the argument of India's vast size and illiteracy. She has roughly eighteen times the area of Great Britain and over eight times the population, but not very many more people able easily to read and write

\* Since all this was written a scholarly caste Hindu of Hindustan has advocated Pakistan even more strongly than Dr. Ambedkar, though much more briefly. In Chapter III of his *Future of South-East Asia*, Mr. K. M. Panikkar says the separation of Pakistan is "obviously the one way in which the Hindu-Moslem problem can be finally settled." He believes it to be also desirable, if not essential, for the future security of India as a whole, because he thinks she would disintegrate under the reaction against an effort to impose on her a single Federal Government. "The re-integration of India must come through an organic relationship between two independent States, in the relationship between whom there will be no place for constitutional safeguards or majority and minority considerations. The two States could then work together on defence, foreign policy, and any other matter of common interest."

Dr. K. M. Munshi, formerly a Hindu Minister in the Congress Government of Bombay, told the Sapru "Conciliation" Committee in January 1945 that something should be done to satisfy "Moslem aspirations for autonomy free from Hindu domination." He suggested the division of India into three zones—Hindu, Moslem, and the zone of the Indian States (I do not know whether he explained, if he could, how the hopelessly scattered Indian States were to be made one zone.) Dr. Munshi went on to suggest a federal centre with a jurisdiction more limited in the Moslem and the Princes' zones than in the Hindu zone. This centre would apparently have functions analogous to those proposed for Imparsia, but perhaps slightly exceeding them.

in any of their own 220 languages, let alone the sub-continent's *lingua franca*. To hold this up as a charge against official mishandling of education may be fair in politics. It is more obviously true that many of the illiterates are superior in practical sense and intelligence to many of the lettered. But these answers cannot disprove India's shortage, in relation to her size and population, of people competent and willing to undertake political and administrative responsibilities for the whole of so great and variegated a country in the infancy of its sovereign, democratic autonomy. Federation with provincial autonomy may ease the strain by dispersing it, but cannot dissolve it. If the provinces are to be managed really well they cannot spare suitable talent for the Federal Government, Parliament and Services ; and *vice versa*. If India were divided into two Dominions, each within itself would find something of the same difficulty, but each of the two Dominions' Governments, Parliaments and Civil Services would have a more comprehensible jurisdiction, tasks more nearly within their range and grasp, fewer rivalries to bother them, and less distraction by problems beyond the scope of their individual members' direct interest.

After all, though cutting a man's stomach open or sawing into his skull is a drastic performance, it is done every day with everybody's approval where the only alternative is a life of pain or unhappiness for the patient. A surgeon will amputate a leg to save the rest of the body, although the leg once amputated is dead and useless. Pakistan separated from Hindustan would be neither dead nor useless, and Hindustan would not even be lame. On the contrary, the Pakistanis might well develop a new and livelier interest in their national integrity, as against dangers threatening India from across the frontier and elsewhere. If they become subject, instead, to the quasi-alien rule of a Hindu majority at Delhi, there will be little hope of their bringing tribal territory to peace within the Indian Commonwealth. They may be tempted, rather, to look beyond the border and the frontier for aid against

Hindu domination ; or they may feel it is scarcely worth while to resist an alien invader so that alien rule may be perpetuated at the Federal Centre. But make their Pakistan independent under the Crown, and you may see an all-round improvement. The new Dominion may discover pride enough in its sovereign status to defend itself against all foes, military, social and economic. Nor need there be fears of a Pakistan-Hindustan *anschluss* by force if the two Indian Dominions pool the bulk of their military resources in a system of continental defence under Delhi's neutral though representative control.

I have quoted testimony by Sir William Barton to an instinct for democracy among the Pathans. Let us also remember the plain fact that, with all their not-peculiar faults, the Moslems in their very special provinces have made the better show of democratic self-government since 1937. They are much less likely to accept a remote totalitarian regime, and we should look silly if we expected them to tolerate it after all the sermons on democracy we have preached to Europe. We are equally bound to safeguard the Hindus against such an explosion of Moslem wrath as systems less unnatural to Hindustan might provoke. The Cripps and Wavell offers wisely uncorked the best antidote to both these perils.

And it would not rest on logic or convenience only : it would have some basis in history. The unity of India, so far as it goes, is the artificial creation of a unitary government imposed from without. Certainly it is a Good Thing, as the most Anglophobe Indian admits ; but it is not indigenous to the country or natural to its people and history. We were able to take India because we found it divided against itself, here, there and everywhere. We ejected other alien competitors for shares of it. We took a large part of it from Mussulman Moghuls, some of whose forebears had been perhaps its greatest masters : we fought a variety of Hindu chieftains : we flung Mohammedan Tippu Sultan out of Hindu Mysore and Travancore. We conquered at times with Moslem

allies, at others with Hindu allies. The country has never known unity from Srinagar to Trivandrum and from Quetta to Calcutta save in the peace imposed on it by British rule. Many minor breaches and divisions have been healed, we may hope for ever : but the fundamental distinction between Islam and Hinduism looks as if it must remain, and it is no more our business to subordinate the one civilization to the other than to aid the subjection of Bohemia or the Balkans to German *kultur*. We are now busily removing the alien bond of unity, and lest its disappearance release full-blast the fissiparous tendencies now reappearing, there is something to be said for redistributing India as fairly, naturally and securely as possible, with the best available guarantee of peace, to the rival claimants from whom we seized it—and who helped us in each other's dispossession. Two Indian Dominions, each as nearly homogeneous as its nature allows, would be better than one enormous cockpit of feuds under relics of alien rule.

#### APPENDIX I

*The following are extracts from declarations by non-Moslems in defence of the Indian minorities' standpoint, with particular reference to separate electorates.*

1. By the late Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India in 1905-10 :

" Let us not forget that the difference between Mohammedanism and Hinduism is not a mere difference of articles of religious faith and dogma. It is a difference of life, in tradition, in history, in all the social things as well as articles of belief that constitute a community. Do not let us forget what makes it interesting and even exciting. Do not let us forget that in talking of Hindus and Mohammedans, we are dealing with, and are brought face to face with, vast historic issues. We are dealing with the very mightiest forces that through all the centuries and ages have moulded the fortunes of great States and the destinies of countless millions of mankind."

"The Mohammedans protested that the Hindus would elect a pro-Hindu, just as I suppose, in a mixed college of say seventy-five Catholics and twenty-five Protestants voting together, the Protestants might suspect that the Catholics voting for the Protestant would choose what is called a Romanizing Protestant, and as little of a Protestant as they could find. Suppose the other way. In Ireland there is an expression, a shoneen Catholic—that is to say, a Catholic who, though a Catholic, is too friendly with English Conservatism and other influences which the Nationalists dislike. And it might be said, if there were seventy-five Protestants against twenty-five Catholics, that the Protestants when giving a vote in the way of Catholic representation, would return shoneens."

2. By Mr. H. H. Asquith, as Prime Minister.

"The distinction between Muslim and Hindu is not merely religious but it cuts deep down into the traditions of the historic past and is also differentiated by the habits and social customs of the community."

"Undoubtedly there will be a separate register for Muslims. To us here at first sight it looks an objectionable thing because it discriminates between people and segregates them into classes on the basis of religious creed. I do not think that is a very formidable objection."

3. By Mr. G. K. Gokhale, a Hindu still acknowledged to have been one of the greatest of all Congressmen :

"I think the most reasonable plan is first to throw open a substantial minimum of seats to election on a territorial basis in which all qualified to vote should take part without distinction of race or creed. And then supplementary elections should be held for minorities which numerically or otherwise are important enough to need special representation, and these should be confined to members of minorities only."

4. By Mr. (later Sir) C. Y. Chintamani, a Hindu Liberal, in evidence before the Reforms Enquiry Committee :

Q. "I believe you had something to do with the granting of separate electorates to the Mohammedans in the District Boards ?

C. Y. C. Yes.

*Q.* This state of things may also partly be due to the very fact that, the Mohammedans having been satisfied in the demand that they were putting forward for a separate electorate, there is now less friction between the Hindus and Mohammedans?

*C. Y. C.* Yes.

*Q.* You are not opposed to separate electorates being continued?

*C. Y. C.* No.

*Q.* As a journalist and a politician having intimate knowledge of the actually existing conditions, you are aware of the fact that the generality of Mohammedans want at present to be represented through their own separate electorates?

*C. Y. C.* Yes.

*Q.* Would you force mixed electorates upon them against their wish?

*C. Y. C.* No, I would not.

## APPENDIX II

*Following are examples, in briefest outline, of measures sponsored or instigated by, with, or from the Punjab Unionist Party and Administration.*

### *Under the Old Constitution*

Act requiring a moneylender to keep accounts in a prescribed form and send half-yearly copies of them to his debtors.

Statutory restrictions on imprisonment for debt and rates of interest, and establishment of Conciliation Boards for the scaling down of debts.

Permissive Act to protect from attachment, under certain conditions, the ancestral property of an agricultural debtor, his standing crops, and so much of his land as may be essential to the maintenance of his family.

### *In Office and Power*

A five-fold extension of Debt Conciliation Boards, so that there is now one in every District.

Law to prevent mortgagee or lessee of agricultural land

from destroying or permanently impairing its value as a farm, save by consent of the owner.

Amendment of Alienation of Land Act to prevent its evasion by so-called *benami* transactions. In order to acquire land in despite of the law, many non-agriculturists had "borrowed" the names of registered peasants or suborned them to act as dummy purchasers. The amending Bill negatived transfers made by this species of fraud, and entitled the original owners or their heirs to recover the land, sometimes but not always with compensation to the purchaser.

An Act whereby a money-lender must be registered and hold a licence if he is to be able to sue successfully for recovery of his loans, and may lose his licence if the Courts find him guilty of certain offences. This and another new law are applicable against agriculturists engaged in money-lending "on the side."

A Bill to prevent hanky-panky by middlemen dealing in agricultural produce.

Relief for the very small smallholder who hitherto had paid land-revenue at the same rate per acre as the man running a larger and more prosperous *zamin*. I gather that a peasant whose holding yields him less than a specified minimum may be exempted from land-revenue.

After the failure of its first general Act to enforce primary education, the Ministry carried another which empowered any local authority to make primary education compulsory in its area. In the Census of 1941 the Punjab claimed an increase of 140 per cent. since 1931, in the number of its literates—double the rate of increase for India as a whole.

Doubling of the duty on *charas*—a dangerous hemp drug which perhaps ought not to be admitted at all.

Appointment of committees to tackle the problems of unemployment and retrenchment in Government expenditure; and special new machinery for an attack on corruption.

An Act to regulate hours of work and wages in shops and bazaars, and to provide for a fortnight's holiday annually, with full pay.

I cannot go into details of departmental activities : administrative work, I mean, for the general welfare of the province. Many of them are legacies, of course, from the old regime, or

new suggestions of the permanent British officials. The fact remains that, in spite of imperfections not peculiar to it, the new Punjab Government gave accelerated momentum to the constructive services of every Department. A special fund was established for a six-year programme of rural development : each Beneficent Department was to intensify its activity in a selected sector of every district, spreading out to a new sector year by year. A new irrigation project is on the way, with hope for what are now arid wastes. A 30 per cent. increase of expenditure on the Agricultural Department allowed, among other things, for the distribution of improved seed on a scale not attempted before, the encouragement of fruit-growing and canning, and a big expansion of veterinary services (the best in India, though still desperately inadequate). In a newly irrigated "colony" the Government made 79 grants of 50 acres each to draw young men into farming from the hopeless ranks of the "educated unemployed." Village and cottage industries were helped by "peripatetic demonstration parties."

### *APPENDIX III*

Sir Sikandai Hyat Khan "continued a remarkable family tradition." His grandfather, Karam Khan, fought for John Nicholson in 1848 and raised a force to defend the Maigala Pass. Karam's son, Muhammad Hyat Khan, joined Abbott with recruits for the last phase of wars in the same period ; raised an Afridi force against the insurgents of 1857, and was A.D.C. to Nicholson in the Punjab Mobile Column. Twice he saved Nicholson's life at the siege of Delhi, and is said to have made a gallant effort to intercept with his own body the shot that brought Nicholson down. He nursed his General devotedly to the end.

Sikander was born to Muhammad Hyat in 1892, nine years before his father died at a ripe age. He went to University College, London, and served with the Forces throughout World War I. In the Third Afghan War of 1919 he was attached to Brigade Headquarters, but got leave to join his old regiment in action because it contained a company he himself had raised. He was possibly the first Indian to command a British-Indian company under fire ; he was the first Indian Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank

of India ; after years of high office in the administration of his province, he was the first Indian Premier to be ready with a Cabinet and a handsome parliamentary majority when the new regime began on April 1st, 1937. He was not impressive in appearance or manner, save to those who like a quiet and modest dignity. He would rather pull his weight than throw it about. You may think, if you must, that he knew which side his bread was buttered—because it happened to be the side on which the prosperity and orderly progress of his province rest. In fact, he sacrificed butter and comparative ease when he gave up the Reserve Bank post and re-entered politics at the request of his old party.

#### APPENDIX IV

*Telegram from Sir Chimanlal H. Setalvad, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, V. N. Chandavarkar (Liberals), V. D. Savarkar (Hindu Mahasabha); N. C. Kelkar, Jamnadas M. Mehta (Democratic Swarajya Party) : B. R. Ambedkar (Depressed Classes and Independent Labour Party).*

'Dated 3rd October, 1939.

To His Excellency the Viceroy,

The step taken by His Excellency the Governor-General to take the people of India into confidence by means of consultations with Indian leaders and thus to secure the willing co-operation of India in fighting the War is welcomed. It is believed that these consultations are being held for the purpose of arriving at some agreement as regards the future political status of India as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. While feeling the necessity of consultations for such purpose, we urge that in the solution of that question all parties and interests are vitally concerned and therefore entitled to be consulted. So far it is learnt that the Governor-General had consultations with Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah as representing the Congress and the Muslim League respectively and that further consultations with those gentlemen are to follow.

Mr. Gandhi in the statement issued by him as reported in the papers of the 29th September says, "I maintain that the Congress is an all-inclusive body. Without offence to anybody it can be said of it that it is the only body that has represented for over half a century without a rival the vast

masses of India irrespective of class or creed". Whatever might have been the position of the Congress as representing all-India till it came under the control of its present leaders such claims cannot now be maintained.

It is obvious from the fact that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress President have carried on negotiations with Mr. Jinnah for a Congress-League settlement that Mr. Gandhi and his supporters do not themselves believe the claim put forward for the Congress that it is an all-inclusive body and that it represents the masses of India irrespective of class or creed. The Muslim League at any rate repudiates entirely the claim of the Congress to represent Muslims.

Leaving aside the Muslims, we venture to assert that the Congress cannot claim to represent all classes of people of all shades of political opinion in the country. The members of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Depressed Classes, the Democratic Swarajya Party, the Liberals, the Landholding and the Labouring Classes, are all outside the Congress and do not recognize the Congress as their mouthpiece.

That all Hindus are not at the back of the Congress is apparent from the fact that a large majority of the people composing the Hindu Mahasabha are not in the Congress fold.

It is true that the Congress obtained at the last elections majorities in the seven provinces which enabled it to form Congress ministries in those provinces. This does not, however, indicate that the Congress had behind it a majority of voters. In the presidency of Bombay, for example, the number of votes cast for non-Congress candidates in the general constituencies totalled 1,053,509 as against 1,483,189 for Congress candidates, but if the votes cast in special constituencies were added to non-Congress votes the Congress had only a minority of voters behind it.

Moreover, the votes that the Congress candidates succeeded in obtaining in the various constituencies were obtained, we venture to say, by false pretences. The general feeling in the country was against the new Constitution as being illiberal and not going far enough. The slogan of the Congress candidates was that they were going into legislatures to wreck the Constitution. This naturally brought the Congress candidates considerable accession of voting strength. The non-Congress candidates had the honesty to express the view

that, though the new Constitution was unsatisfactory, it should be worked so as to get the best out of it in the interests of the country. The Congress members of the legislatures as soon as they took office bade good-bye to their pretensions of wrecking the Constitution and became instead ardent workers of that Constitution. Not only that, but they began using with a vengeance all laws that they called repressive and which they had pledged themselves to repeal. It can, therefore, be rightly asserted that a very appreciable proportion of the voters that sent the Congress to office feel that they were misled and are not now the supporters of the Congress. Further, those in charge of the Congress institution have not retained the confidence of even those who are within the Congress, as is apparent by the formation of what is called the Forward Bloc and the Royist Group.

The reiterated cry of the Congress leaders to secure a definite promise of a free democracy for India as the price of India's co-operation is again not sincere. The way in which they are exercising the limited democratic powers that have been available to them under the present Constitution belies the hope that the present Congress leaders want to establish real democracy in India. The Congress Government resent any opposition and wish, like autocrats, that no opposition should exist. By the experience that people have of Congress Governments in eight provinces for over two years, it is felt that the idea of democracy in the minds of the Congress Governments means suppression of the liberty of the Press, curtailment of the civil liberty of the people and ruthlessly silencing all opposition. Minority opinion in the legislatures is ignored and thrust aside with callous indifference. The Congress and the Congress Government believe in annihilating all parties and making the Congress the only party in the land as is the case in Fascist and Nazi regimes—a result which would be a death-blow to democracy. Congressmen cannot bear rivals and cannot bear sharing credit.

## INDEX

- Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 95ff, 100  
 Abdul Haye, Mian, 91  
 Abdullah, S. M. (Kashmiri), 56  
 Abdul Qadri (cook), 56  
 Afghanistan, 99, 100, 105, 106, 111,  
     115, 125  
 Afidis, 100f, 104  
 Agriculture, 82ff  
 Ajab Khan, 105  
 Ajmer, 126  
 Aka Khel, 100  
 Akalis, 90, 92  
 Ali brothers, 31  
 Al Masjid, 101  
 Alingai, Faqir of, 103f  
 Alwar, 52, 62  
 Amballa Divn., 120f, 131  
 Ambedkar, B R, 20, 73, 134ff, 144  
 Amer, L. S., 119  
 Anand, Mulk Raj, 55  
 Anderson, Sir John, 44, 46  
 Anglo-Indians (Eurasians), 36, 85  
 Army, Indian, 81, 98, 131  
 Assam, 13, 32, 66, 126  
  
 Baccha-i-Saqao, 106  
 Bahawalpur, 18, 52, 119ff  
 Bajauris, 102  
 Baluchistan, 18, 119f  
 Banerjee, Sir Albion, 55  
 Bannu, 105, 108, 111  
 Baroda, 126  
 Barton, Sir Wm., 118, 137  
 Beas, River, 120  
 Bengal, 13, 14, 27, 32, 40, 53, 66,  
     72, 81, 83, 93, 126, 128  
 Best, L. W H D., 104  
 Bhagat Singh (assassin), 41ff, 94  
 Bhopal, 124  
 Bhuta Singh, 94  
 Bihar, 13, 27, 32, 75, 83, 126  
 Bombay, 13, 32, 73, 75, 76, 81, 126,  
     134, 145  
 Bose, Subhas, 80  
 Brahmaputra, River, 129  
  
 Calcutta, 43, 120, 126  
 Cawnpore (1857), 42ff, 95  
 Central Provinces, 13, 32, 70ff, 74f,  
     126  
 Chakdaria, 103  
 Chandavarkar, V N., 144  
 Chhotu Ram, Chaudhuri, 88, 91  
 Chintamani, Sir C Y, 140  
 Chittagong, 44, 129, 130  
 Chitral, 103, 117  
 Christians, Indian, 33, 36, 40, 85  
 Civil Disobedience, 28, 37f, 85  
 Communal Award, the, 36  
 Congress Party, *passim*  
 Constituent Assembly, 9, 15ff, 35  
 Co-operative societies, 83, 85  
 Country Party—*see Unionist Party*  
 Coupland, Prof Sir R., 7, 77, 79,  
     97, 124  
 Crimps, Stafford (or Crimps plan),  
     9ff, 63, 68, 95, 136  
 Curzon, Lord, 129  
  
 Dacca (Bengal), 129  
 Dargai, 103f  
 Delhi, 118, 129, 130f  
     ,, Pact, (1931), 37f  
 Democratic Swaraj Party, 40, 145  
 Depressed Classes (*see also Scheduled  
     Castes*), 20, 33,  
     36f, 40, 72f, 145  
 Desai, Bhulabhai, 10  
 Dogras, 53  
 Dumasia, Naoroji, 73  
 Durand Line, 99, 115  
  
 East Bengal, 128ff  
 Education, 47, 72, 77  
 Elections, 16, 29, 32, 33, 64, 65ff,  
     89, 90, 145  
 Ellis, Molly, 105  
 Emerson, Sir Herbert, 91  
  
 Fazl-i-Hussain, Sir, 85f  
 Ferozepore, 82

- Firoz Khan Noon, Sir, 88  
 Frontier, N.W.—*see N.W.F.P.*  
     Constabulary, 98, 109,  
     111, 117  
 Fundamental Rights, Congress  
     Declaration of, 59f
- Gandhi, M. K., 8, 10, 22, 24, 25,  
     26, 30, 31, 33, 36ff, 43, 47, 51f,  
     59, 66f, 69, 70, 74, 78, 85, 144f  
 Germany, 22, 28, 46, 79  
 Ghaffar Khan, Abdul—*see Abdul  
     Ghaffar Khan*  
 Gokhale, G. K., 26, 140  
 Government of India, 8ff, 14, 17,  
     30-1, 58, 63, 73, 113f, 117, 123,  
     130  
 Government of Britain, 9, 48  
 Gyani Sher Singh, 94
- Halifax, Lord—*see Irwin*  
 Halimzai, 102  
 Hindi, 72  
 Hindu Mahasabha—*see Mahasabha*  
 Hindustan, 120f, 126ff  
 Hitler, 28, 65, 79  
 House of Commons, 23, 110  
 Huque, Sir Azizul, 77  
 Hyat Khan, Sir Sikandar—*see  
     Sikandar Hyat Khan*  
 Hyderabad State, 49, 126
- Imparsia, 130f  
 Independent Labour Party, 40,  
     133, 144  
 Indus, River, 96, 99, 115, 125  
 Ipi, Faqir of, 107  
 Iqbal, Sir Muhammad, 94  
 Ireland, 120  
 Irwin, Lord, 37  
 Islamabad, 58  
 Islamia College, 100
- Jammu—*see Kashmir*  
 Jamrud, 100-1  
 Japanese, 10, 63  
 Jawaharlal Nehru—*see Nehru*  
 Jehangir, Sir Cowasji, 144  
 Jinnah, M. A., 7, 76, 124, 144f  
 Jogaendra Singh, Sir, 88  
 Jullundur Divn., 120f, 131  
 Justice Party, 127
- Kajuri Plain, 100  
 Kapurthala, 52, 62  
 Karachi, 125  
     Congress at, 25, 29, 41ff  
 Kashmir, 18, 49, 52ff, 95, 114, 119f,  
     121, 124, 125  
 Kelkar, N. G., 144  
 Khairpur, 110f  
 Khan Sahib, Dī, 97  
 Khair, Dī, 70ff  
 Khilafatists, 31  
 Khizri Hyat Khan Tiwana, 91  
 Khyber, 100-1  
 Kohat, 104, 105, 111  
 Kurram, 99, 105
- Lahore, 29, 89, 96, 119, 125  
 Lajpat Rai, Lala, 26  
 Lal Chand, Chaudhri, 94  
 Landi Kotal, 101  
 Languages, 25, 72  
 Legislatures, 12, 13, 16, 29, 32, 40,  
     41, 46, 64, 66, 70, 78, 83, 90, 122f  
 Liaquat Ali Khan, 10  
 Liberals, 33, 40, 71, 145  
 Linlithgow, Lord, 89  
 Loharu, 52  
 Lucknow Agreement, 35, 36, 48  
     „ Congress at, 25, 29
- Madras, 13, 18, 31, 32, 70, 72, 85,  
     126, 127  
 Mahasabha, Hindu, 7, 40, 74, 145  
 Mahrattas, 72  
 Majithia, Sir Sunder Singh, 91, 94  
 Malakand, 103  
 Malerkotla, 52  
 Manohar Lal, Lala, 87, 91  
 Marriage, age at, 81  
 Matthai, Dr. John, 124f  
 Mehta, Jamnadas, 37, 144  
 Meynell, Godfrey, V.C., 103  
 Minto, Lord, 28  
 Mody, Sir H. P., 124f  
 Mohmands, 101, 117  
 Money-lending, 84f  
 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, 73,  
     96  
 Moplahs, 31  
 Morley, Lord, 28, 139  
 Morley-Minto Reforms, 28, 96  
 Moslem League, 7, 8, 10, 11, 18,  
     33, 34, 35, 74, 76, 91, 93, 97, 144

- Motikal Nehru, 34, 42  
 Mudaliar, Sir Ramaswami, 10  
 Muhammad Hyat Khan Noon, 94  
 Mulk Raj Anand, 55  
 Munshi, K. M., 136  
 Muzaffar Khan, Nawab, 94  
 Mysore, 49, 52, 126
- Nadir Khan, King, 105, 106  
 Naidu, Sarojini, 33  
 Nariman, Mr. 80  
 Nazimuddin, Khwaja, Sir, 46f  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 24, 25, 38, 51,  
     59, 63f, 69  
 Noon, Sir Firoz Khan—*see Firoz  
     Khan Noon*  
 Nowshera, 98  
 N.W.F.P., 13, 18, 31, 32, 66, 92,  
     Chaps. VII & VIII, 119
- Orakzais, 105  
 Orissa, 13, 27, 32
- Pakistan, 18, 20, 53, Chaps. IX &  
     X  
 Palestine, 7, 97, 107, 109f, 120  
 Pandits (Kashmiri), 54ff  
 Pannikar, K. M., 136  
 Parachinar, 99  
 Parsis, 73f  
 Patel, Vallabhai, 37, 80  
 Pathans, 66, 96ff  
 Peshawar, 98, 100, 101, 111  
 Prasad, Rajendra, 68  
 Press :  
     Congress, 48f, 59ff, 93  
     *Harijan*, 34, 78  
     *Hindu, The*, 93  
     *Jam-e-Jamshed*, 73  
     *Leader, The*, 93  
     *Manchester Guardian, The*,  
         7  
     *Times, The*, 31-2, 68, 92  
 Princes, Indian, 13, 14, 79  
 Prohibition, 68  
 Punjab, 8, 13, 18, 29, 32, 40, 66  
     Chap. VI, 111, 113, 119f, 127
- Quislings (various), 32
- Rahim Bakhsh, Haji, 94  
 Rajah, M. C., 72
- Rajendra Prasad, 68  
 Rajkot, 51  
 Rajputana, 126  
 Razmak, 106  
 Reddi, Sri K. V., 71  
 Red Shirts, 31, 95ff, 103  
 Reports.  
     Coupland, 46, 77, 79, 97, 124  
     Jt. Parity, 12  
     Kamal Yar Jung, 77  
     Nehru (All-Parties), 34-5  
     Niemeyer, 125  
     Sapru "Conciliation," 125, 136  
     Simon Commission, 12
- Ripon, Lord, 27  
 Roberts, Sir Wm., 91  
 Round Table Conference, 15, 36,  
     38, 91
- Sapru, Sir T. B., 10, 125  
 Scheduled Castes (*see also Depressed  
     Classes*), 7, 8, 9,  
     16
- Satyamurti, Mr., 65  
 Savarkai, V. D., 7, 144  
 Sayani, R. M., 27, 30  
 Sen Gupta, J. M., & Mis., 42  
 Separate Electorates, 35, 96, 48  
 Setalvad, Sir Chimanlal, 144  
 Shabkadr, 101  
 Shahidganj Mosque, 89  
 Shah Nawaz, Begum, 91  
 Shamoza, 103  
 Sher Mohammed Khan, Sir, 94  
 Sholapur (riots), 41  
 Sikandar Hyat Khan, Sir, 85ff, 144  
 Sikhs, 29, 35, 40, 81, 82, 85, 88, 89,  
     90, 120ff, 131  
 Simla Conference, 1945, 8ff  
 Sind, 13, 18, 29, 32, 40, 114, 119f,  
     125
- Sircar, Sir N. N., 44f  
 Srinagar, 56f  
 States, Indian, 13, 16, Chap. IV,  
     136
- Sudetenland, 97, 115  
 Sukkur dam, 125  
 Sunder Singh Majithia, Sir, 91, 94  
 Surat, 75  
 Surya Sen (murderer), 44  
 Sutlej, River, 120  
 Swat, 103, 104  
 Sylhet, 129

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Tamils, 72                                       | Ulster, 120f   |
| Tara Singh, Master, 94                           | Unionist Party, Punjab, 8, 85ff,<br>141ff                          |
| Tegart, Sir Charles, 44                          | United Provinces, 13, 32, 74, 75,<br>83                            |
| Theosophism, 41, 43ff                            | Untouchables— <i>see Depressed Classes<br/>or Scheduled Castes</i> |
| Thompson, Mr Edward, 30                          | Urdu, 72   "   |
| Thorburn, Mr., 83                                | Watson, Sir Alfred, 44   |
| Tilak, 30  | Wavell, Lord, 8ff, 30, 68  |
| Travancore, 126                                  | Wazirs & Waziristan, 105ff   |
| Traces, frontier, Chaps. VII &<br>VIII, 119, 125 | Zafriullah Khan, Sir Md., 130                                      |
| Turangzai, Haji of, 101                          | Zemindars, 83ff  |
| Turks, 105                                       |  |
| Turkey, 18, 31                                   |  |
| Ujjal Singh, Sardar, 92                          |  |

